

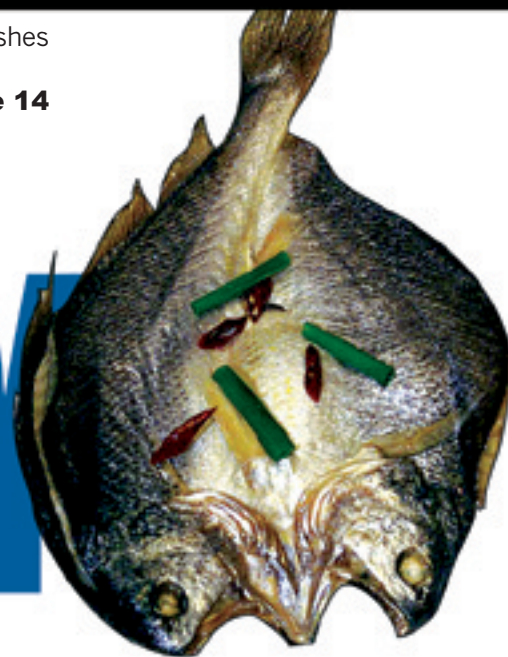
Unusually for a gate tower, Deshengmen has no central gateway. **Page 16**



Despite its small size, China's young baseball league has already developed an enthusiastic national fan base. **Page 13**



Most of Hangzhou's best known dishes are based on regional ingredients. **Page 14**



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Students Scammed

By Su Wei, Gemma Casas (Mariana Variety), Aldwin Fajardo (Saipan Tribune)

Chen Yongxiang, a taxi driver from Yanji, Liaoning Province, says his dream to earn money while studying was shattered immediately after his arrival on October 5 last year at the Northern Mariana Islands' Saipan University.

Now, Chen says, he is deeply in debt, having borrowed over 70,000 yuan to cover the cost of his studies. The university has provided no work and little in the way of education. "There are 87 other Chinese students at the university in the same situation. We have been cheated, we are victims!" he told *Beijing Today* in a telephone interview on December 29.

Saipan University is located in the village of Susupe on Saipan Island, part of the US Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), in the western Pacific Ocean.

The founder of the university, Park Soon Kyung, was arrested by the FBI on December 16 on the nearby island of Guam. He was charged over his involvement in a scheme to fraudulently induce 88 Chinese students to study on Saipan for a fee of over \$5,000 each, through false representations and promises.

At a hearing on December 30, Kyung pleaded not guilty to the charges and also objected to the US government's filing of a forfeiture complaint. The judge at the hearing ordered that Park be held for trial on March 1.

CNMI governor's legal counsel Steve Newman told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday that the offices of the governor and the attorney general, together with the US side, were doing everything in their power to ensure that the perpetrators of the alleged fraud would be made to account for their actions and that justice would be served. **Cheated**

According to several of the students *Beijing Today* spoke to, all 88 were cheated by the university from the very beginning. "Materials that Kyung showed me when I met him in Yanji said the university is a full-time private university with over 20 majors ranging from arts and sports to computer technology and law as well as the availability of a bachelor degree," said Cai Hu, 34, formerly a middle school teacher in Yanji. "But after we arrived, we found there was only one subject available at the university - English."

Chen Gang, also from Yanji, said, "We only have four hours of English classes per day. We have no textbooks at all, only photocopied teaching materials provided by the teachers." All the students paid a tuition fee of \$3,550 for studying English at the university.

Cai said there are only five classrooms and one teacher's office in the university, which covers two floors of a rented building. "The university has only seven staff, five teachers, the president and a secretary," he said. "Although the university's materials talk about computer rooms and libraries, there are no teaching facilities except desks, chairs and blackboards. There is only one computer, but it can't connect to the Internet."

The students have also taken

issue with the accommodation provided. "We were promised we would live in dormitories at the standard of a three-star hotel. But actually four people share one room with an area of just seven square meters. The only furniture are beds, though we were promised air conditioning and televisions," Cai said. "And there is insufficient running water, we can only take a bath every two or three days!" The university charges each student \$120 per month for accommodation.

Students interviewed also expressed dissatisfaction with their meals, which are provided by a Korean restaurant as the university has no canteens. "For each meal we only have hard rice, a thin soup and a dish of fried vegetables," Cai said. "Most of us suffered from diarrhoea after eating that food." Each student is charged \$180 per month for three meals a day.

Students say the key attraction for them to choose to study at Saipan University was the promise that they could work while studying. "We were told we would receive student visas two months after entering Saipan with a visitor permit, and would be provided jobs within two months with a monthly salary between \$600 and \$1,500 in the form of scholarship if we can have two hours' study per day," Cai said.

Chen Ping (a pseudonym), 30, from Qingdao, added, "All this is stated in our contracts, signed by Kyung." Chen, a supermarket manager, had planned to study business at the university. "Till now we have not received a student visa. Now we know that the university cannot provide any job opportunities to us at all. It is illegal for foreign students to work here unless we are hired in the institution's student internship program."

Deliberate fraud

Julie Ulloa-Heath, who was named president of Saipan University on August 18 last year and resigned on October 17, told *Beijing Today* in an email Monday, that the university was not just a language school, but had been authorized by the CNMI Board of Regents, on a provisional basis, to offer bachelors degrees in social welfare, business administration and computer technology.

She said that last September, when the first of the 88 Chinese



Chinese students in one of the small, sparsely furnished dormitories at Saipan University.

Photo by Jacq Hernandez, Mariana Variety

'We only have four hours of English classes per day. We have no textbooks at all, only photocopied teaching materials provided by the teachers.'

On June 23 last year, China's Ministry of Education established a system to alert those who want to study overseas about illegal practices conducted by some intermediary companies and overseas educational institutions in student recruitment.

In the past six months, 13 such notices have been announced for high schools and universities offering language and vocational courses in countries including New Zealand, Canada and Sweden.

students arrived on Saipan, they expressed dissatisfaction with the campus as well as the programs being offered. "These issues were brought to the attention of Dr. Park and he explained to me and the students that it was all a misunderstanding," she wrote.

She says Kyung had assured her that the second group of Chinese students were aware that the university had only three degree programs, the current campus, and that students being not allowed to work while studying. "Upon meeting the second lot of students, it was apparent that Dr. Park failed to tell the truth both to the students and to me."

At the end of last October, local media quoted Ulloa-Heath's replacement, Jesus Taisague, as saying that the school was "seriously working" on the issue of accreditation. "Before we even initiate a pro-

cess (for accreditation) there are several things that have to be put in place, otherwise it would be premature for us to initiate the process. The State Board of Regents required (us to have a) library, the computer laboratory and the general facility itself," he was reported as saying.

In the middle of last November, Taisague was quoted in local newspaper, the *Mariana Variety*, as saying there had been a "miscommunication" between Kyung and the students. The report said Taisague says the student permit to be issued to the students takes time to process, as the Department of Immigration requires that every Chinese document submitted must have an accompanying notarized English translation, and that some students had failed to provide the English translation of their birth certificates.

A teacher at the university who requested anonymity sent an email to *Beijing Today*, accusing Taisague of complicity in what he described as a scheme to defraud the Chinese students, however, Taisague has so far declined to make any comment.

Investigation

Early this week the FBI started seizing money placed in different bank accounts allegedly derived from the scheme. *Mariana Variety* reports court documents showed that the warrants issued covered the \$39,000 in an account at Bank of Hawaii on Saipan held in the name of the university president Jesus Taisague, and \$63,000 in an account at Bank of Guam on Guam held in the name of a Michael Lee.

The report further states that the warrants also cover funds in Bank of Guam accounts held on Saipan in the name of Saipan University and \$15,000 on Guam in the name of American International University.

In an affidavit, the FBI stated that there is probable cause to believe that the bank funds were derived from proceeds traceable to the fraud.

The FBI said it inspected a marketing brochure used in the scheme which states that AIU is the sister school of Saipan University and Tinian University.

The FBI said analysis of bank records show that deposits totaling \$240,000 were made in the Bank of Guam account in the

Health Ministry Announces Second Suspected Sars Case

By Zhu Shida

Another suspected SARS case has been found in Guangdong, the Chinese Ministry of Public Health announced yesterday afternoon. The case is unrelated to that of the patient earlier confirmed to have contracted SARS, who was discharged from hospital yesterday, according to Xinhua.

From 10 am Wednesday to 10 am Thursday, there were no reports of further suspected SARS cases.

The suspected SARS patient is a restaurant waitress, 20, a native of Shangcai county in Zhumadian in Henan. She felt uncomfortable on December 25, ran a fever the next day and was hospitalized at the fever clinic at the No.1 Hospital of the Yuexiu District of Guangzhou on December 31 of last year.

On the afternoon of January 7, a group of medical scientists determined that the patient was suspected of suffering from SARS and was transferred to the city's No. 8 Hospital. Further epidemiological and laboratory studies are now underway.

The patient has been in a stable condition for the last seven days and her temperature has returned to normal.

No fever cases have appeared from among the 48 people who had close contact with her or from 52 others who had general contact with her.

None of those who had contact with the first SARS patient developed a fever and the last of them were released from isolation yesterday.

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China's 'Big Four' Eye Commercial Banks in Real Sense

The State Council's capital injection into the Bank of China and China Construction Bank was a "very unusual and completely new" reform that targets the country's massive state-owned commercial bank system, economists said Tuesday.

The State Council announced early Tuesday morning that it has finished a capital injection into the two banks selected for joint-stock reform, using US \$45 billion of the nation's foreign exchange reserve.

Yi Xianrong, director of the financial development institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that the Chinese government has mapped out a detailed reform plan for turning the two state-owned commercial banks into "commercial banks in the real sense."

"The plan absorbs sufficient overseas experience and boasts great feasibility," he said in an exclusive interview with

Xinhua.

Observers noted the move is aimed to help state-owned banks to mitigate the existing and potential financial risks to a great extent and sharpen their competitive edge in the face of foreign rivals entering the domestic market after the country's accession into the World Trade Organization.

China has promised to open its banking business – in all places and all currencies – to foreign banks by 2006. However, the four major state-owned commercial banks are still beleaguered by lack of corporate governance, high non-performing loan (NPL) ratio and low capital adequacy ratio.

Central bank figures show that the "big four" – Bank of China, China Construction Bank, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and Agricultural Bank of China – had outstanding NPL amounting to 1.99 trillion yuan (239.76 billion

US dollars) by the end of last September.

This represents a NPL ratio of 21.4 percent, 13 percentage points more than the country's 11 joint-stock commercial banks and even more than those well-known foreign banks.

"This has aroused great concern from China's leadership," said Qiu Zhaoxiang, director of the financial research institute of the University of International Business and Economics.

A decision of the Communist Party of China Central Committee has clearly pointed out that China will choose eligible state-owned commercial banks to conduct joint-stock reform, replenish capital in cash and create conditions for listing.

Wu Xiaoqiu, a financial research fellow of the People's University of China, predicted that the two pilot banks would be listed in the stock market in the foreseeable future so as to

collect funds for their business expansion and risk control.

The Bank of China and Construction Bank of China made profits of 40 billion to 50 billion yuan (4.82 billion to 6.02 billion US dollars) each in 2003; among the "big four" state-owned banks, Bank of China boasts the best financial conditions and Construction Bank boasts the best asset quality.

The two banks' pilot reform would offer experience for other state-owned banks, Wu said.

He noted that joint-stock reform and stock listing create only a platform for the market-based operation of state-owned banks. But it do not mean that all the problems the banks face can be solved. Rather, the banks must strengthen their internal control in line with corporate governance so as to become modern commercial banks with competitiveness in the international market. (Xinhua)

CSRC Takes Over Southern Securities

By Zhao Hongyi

China Southern Securities, one of the country's oldest securities brokers, was taken over jointly by China Security Regulatory Commission (CSRC) and the Shenzhen government on January 2. The reason given by CSRC is that the company "lacks the ability to bail itself out of trouble."

Established in September 1992, the Shenzhen-based securities broker operated smoothly throughout the 1990s. In 2002, it increased its business capital to 3.46 billion yuan by issuing additional shares. But since then, problems such as lack of internal management and business mis-

handling have adversely affected the company's balance sheet and financial strength.

CSRC has tightened its supervision over the company in recent years, providing business assessing and adjusting advices and capital needed for its transaction clearances.

"But all the measures have failed to help the company get out of the trouble," said Niu Guanxing, leader of the newly appointed management group in Shenzhen on January 2.

Sources close to Southern Securities explained the broker's problems exist mainly in its investment business segment. A

reevaluation of the shares held will be conducted, and shares with potentiality will be kept, while those with bad performance will be sold.

The take over led to several days of selling pressure on the stock market. Many shares held by Southern Securities saw their prices decline soon after the step was announced last Friday. But those that have performed well in the past years, such as Southern Airlines, Harbin Pharmaceuticals and Harbin Auto, have been relatively unaffected.

Unlike the cancellation of the Changchun-based Xinhua

Securities last month, Southern Securities will continue operations. "The takeover won't stop the company doing business," said Niu, in an effort to ease market nervousness. "The purpose (of the takeover) is to prevent possible financial turmoil brought by the broker's further deterioration."

But one thing is clear, large shareholders of Southern Securities are seeing big losses. Beijing Capital and Shanghai Auto are the biggest investors of the company. Other big losers include Handan Iron and Steel, Neptune Bio, Sinopec Zhongyuan Oil and Gas, and Ancai Hi-tech.

Legal Service Organizations to be Regulated

China will ban unauthorized legal services organizations in 2004, in an effort to regulate the market, Minister of Justice Zhang Fusen said here Wednesday.

Zhang explained that some legal services organizations do not meet operational requirements, and some have been set up without approval.

Meanwhile, different organizations are supervised by different government organs, which has resulted in unclear and overlapping management.

The Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Civil Affairs and State Administration for Industry and Commerce made a joint inspection of the legal services market in seven provinces in 2003, and submitted a proposal for rectifying the market to the State Council.

Zhang that lawyers and law offices are the mainstay of the legal services market, but other legal services organizations would be retained in rural

areas due to a shortage of lawyers and law offices there. In cities, these organizations will withdraw from lawsuits gradually, and specifically provide public legal counseling.

Meanwhile, China will take measures to regulate the conduct of lawyers, and improve their professional ethics and credibility, Zhang said. "We hope that lawyers will be trustworthy and not charge irrationally high fees," he added.

The Ministry of Justice and the Supreme People's Court will issue a joint regulation to supervise the conduct of and exchanges between lawyers and judges in lawsuits.

So far, some 20 provinces keep credibility records for legal services workers, and the ministry plans to promote this in 2004, according to Zhao Dacheng, director of the ministry's Lawyers and Notarial Affairs Department. (Xinhua)

Illegal Land and Resources Deals to be Curbed

China will step up its efforts to curb illegal allocation of land resources and illegal mining this year, and cases involving senior officials will be a priority.

Sun Wensheng, Minister of Land and Resources, told a national meeting on land and resources, that some leading officials and departments have approved land deals in contravention of laws and regulations for personal gain in recent years.

The government moved last year to rectify the land market, and most localities that illegally delegated the power of approving land deals to subordinate government departments have taken back such rights.

The ministry has made public nine cases of unauthorized use of land for commercial or industrial projects in the past two months.

The minister said China would popularize the use of satellite and remote sensing technology to monitor land resources, and set up a hotline for the general public to report illegal land and resource deals, and will continue to make public major illegal land deals and development projects through the mass media.

China has canceled 2,720 development zones of various kinds to curb illegal land use and protect its cultivated land resources, which has caused a drastic reduction of farmland in recent years and led to tens of thousands of farmers losing their land for very little compensation to industrial and commercial development projects.

The ministry plans to reclaim 170,000 hectares from such development zones where most of the land has been left unused.

Of the country's 3,837 development zones and industrial parks, only 1,251 were approved by the State Council and provincial governments – the only two levels of government with the right to endorse such land use, according to statistics released by the ministry.

Meanwhile, the ministry and local departments in charge of the sector will improve the way the land use rights are transferred by increasing transparency and competition.

The proportion of land plots auctioned for land-use rights will be increased to 33 percent, from the current 15 percent, in an effort to curb illegal trading in land-use rights. (Xinhua)

Public Security Review

Public Security Review

Crimes reported to the 110 emergency service declined by 8.3 percent, compared to the previous week and Beijing police have arrested 111 suspects following investigations.

Break-ins and auto thefts still accounted for the majority of reported crimes.

The break-ins mostly occurred in Dongcheng, Chaoyang, Haidian and Fengtai districts at night and in the early morning.

Unenclosed residential complexes and unguarded houses again were the most common sites for break-ins to occur.

Most reported robberies were committed crimes at lightly populated locations such as walkways between residential complexes, underpasses, crossroads, overpasses and bus stops in Chaoyang, Haidian and Fengtai.

Swindles utilizing mobile phone short messages have been a recent target of the police.

A resident in Fengtai recently lost 50,000 yuan as a result of attempting to buy an illegally imported BMW, communicating with the supposed seller via SMS.

(Information provided by Beijing Public Security Bureau)

Average Tariff Rate Cut Further

By Hou Mingxin

China has started to reduce its average import tariff rate from the current 11 percent to 10.4 percent, in accordance with commitments made to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

An announcement to this effect was made after the planned tariff cuts were agreed to by the State Council, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported on Monday.

During 2003, China reduced its average import tariff rate

from 12 percent to the present level. The previous year marked a steeper cut, from a 15.3 percent average import tariff rate.

The tariff cuts announced last Thursday means the world's most populous country has nearly completed the lowering of tariffs that was part of the requirements for entering the WTO.

China joined the WTO in December 2001, promising to cut average import tariffs to 9.8 percent by 2010.

Purple Line to Protect Cultural Heritage

By Zhang Ran

A so-called "purple line" is being employed in China to protect historical and culturally significant urban sites. Monday's *Beijing Youth Daily* reports a new rule titled Urban Purple Line Administrative Methods, issued by the Ministry of Construction, will take effect from February 1.

According to the ministry, the "purple line" refers to historical and cultural sites nominated by state and provincial governments plus historical buildings named by prefectural governments. In future, town planning should draw a clear line of demarcation to protect such historical and cultural buildings.

According to the rule, constructions inside the "purple line" should be subject to certain review procedures, including judgment by experts. Inside the "purple line," large scale demolition, rebuilding that might transform the historical or cultural features of the sites and demolition or damage to protected buildings are banned.

Foreign Employees to Pay Personal Income Tax

By Zhang Bo

According last Thursday's *Beijing Youth Daily*, the Beijing Local Taxation Bureau requires all foreign employees in Beijing to pay their personal income tax from January 1, 2004. The bureau also reiterated the related regulations on personal income tax.

China's Ministry of Finance has stipulated that foreign employees earning wages temporarily in China from foreign employers should pay personal income tax. As such enterprises are not endowed with right to pre-collect the tax, some foreigners evade their obligation to pay

income tax.

In accordance with regulations set by the State Administration of Taxation, Beijing Local Taxation Bureau recently put forward four related stipulations.

The stipulations prescribe that taxes paid by foreigners employed by foreign enterprises and organizations are to be pre-collected and then paid to taxation organs by their resident missions in Beijing. Foreign enterprises and organizations failing to fulfill the obligation to pre-collect and pay the taxes will be punished in accordance with related taxation laws and regulations.

Citibank and HSBC to Issue Credit Cards

By Hou Mingxin

US-based Citibank and UK-based HSBC Holdings have become the first foreign banks to win approval to issue credit cards in China, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported Thursday.

HSBC will issue the cards in conjunction with the Bank of Shanghai, in which it has an eight percent stake, the report said.

Citibank will team up with Shanghai Pudong Development Bank. Citigroup, Citibank's parent company, has a 4.62 percent stake in the listed Chinese lender.

There are currently some 560 million bank cards in use in China, most of them deposit-backed debit cards, industry sources say.

Less than one percent of these bank cards are true credit cards, partly because there is no unified credit appraisal system to help banks determine a client's creditworthiness, analysts say.

The Bank of China issued China's first credit card, the Great Wall card, in 1986. China's shuttered banking industry is expected to be fully open to foreign lenders by 2007.

Capital Hosts CEPA Promotion

By James Liu

The Promotion Week for the Mainland/Hong Kong and Mainland/Macao Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which is aimed at strengthening economic ties between the Chinese mainland and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions (SAR), started in Beijing on Wednesday. The 10-day activity will include a series of events, headlined by the CEPA Forum held at the Kerry Center that and the following day.

Jointly organized by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), the Hong Kong SAR government and the Macao SAR government, the CEPA promotion activities are intended to introduce Hong Kong and Macao's service trades, tourism resorts and original products to mainland business partners.

Under the CEPA arrangement, which took effect on January 1, 311 Hong Kong and

Macao products are exempt from tariffs when exported to the mainland. Zero tariffs will apply to all Hong Kong goods no later than January 1, 2006.

"We are planning to establish an office and stores in Beijing this year, then we can enter Shanghai and Guangzhou," K.S. Yeung, senior product designer with Hong Kong-based Teamwise International, an exporter and manufacturer of watches, leather goods and fashion accessories, told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday.

Mainland consumers are looking forward to the entry of low-price Hong Kong and Macao products. Local media have reported that special stores selling Hong Kong products should open in Beijing before May 1.

Three large shopping centers, including SCITECH Plaza, Landao Plaza and Full Link Plaza, have arranged to set up special counters to sell products from Hong Kong.



A lion dancing team greeted participants at the opening ceremony for the ten-day CEPA Promotion Week at the Kerry Center on Wednesday.

Photo by Lou Ge

Automakers to Double JV Production Capacity

By James Liu

Chinese automaker Dongfeng Motor Corp. and its French partner PSA Peugeot Citroen announced Tuesday in Beijing that the two sides plan to invest 600 million euros to double the production capacity of their joint venture, Dongfeng Peugeot Citroen Automobiles (DPCA), and introduce new models between now and 2006.

The annual production capacity of the joint venture, based in Wuhan, Hubei Province, will increase from the current 150,000 units to 300,000 units in 2006, Miao Wei, Dongfeng president, announced at the press conference.

The joint venture would introduce three platforms from PSA Peugeot Citroen for producing small, medium and large cars by 2006 at a total cost of 2.58 billion yuan, Miao said. The joint venture plans to launch the Peugeot 307 hatchback in the first quarter of this year and a small-sized car next year.

The joint venture's sales exceeded 100,000 units last year for the first time, up from around 85,000 units in 2002. Since it was established in 1992, DPCA has produced more than 400,000 cars.

At the same time, Dongfeng and PSA are moving to each hold 50-50 stakes in the joint venture by buying stock from other shareholders. "To date, Dongfeng has acquired a 32 percent share in the JV," Miao Wei told *Beijing Today*, "and PSA owns 25.6 percent."

Dongfeng also operates three domestic joint ventures with automakers Honda and Nissan of Japan and South Korea's Kia Motors.

"We need new capacity to hit our targets in China," said Jean-Martin Folz, chief executive officer of PSA Peugeot Citroen. The joint venture aims to sell more than 140,000 cars this year.

Last year, China's total vehicle output reached 4.3 million units, including two million passenger cars.



DPCA plans to release the Pluriel convertible in 2005.

Appliance Retailers Balk at Card Commission Charges

By James Liu

Use of bank cards to make payments is becoming more popular in China and people are getting used to carrying less cash. There are currently around 560 million bank cards in use in this country, over 90 percent of which are debit cards. However, some home appliance chain stores in Shanghai, Chengdu, and Chongqing have refused to accept payment by bank card because they do not like the heavy commission fees charged by the issuing banks.

Ma Yawei, General Manager Assistant of Shanghai Yongle Home Appliance Store, told *China Youth Daily* on December 24 that his store would struggle if

banks did not lower their commission fees. In Shanghai, card issuing banks collect one percent of the total of every transaction made with their cards. According to Ma, Yongle's annual sales volume paid by card is 1.4 billion yuan, meaning the company should hand over 140 million yuan to local banks, a figure equivalent to Yongle's net sales profit.

Gome, another nationwide home appliance giant, is confronting the same problem. Its Chengdu branch shut off dozens of card-swiping terminals and returned them to the local Industrial and Commercial Bank of China on November 15 last year.

The issue is complicated by the

fact that commission fees differ by region. In Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Guangzhou and Fuzhou provinces, commission fees have been dropped to 0.5 percent of transaction value. However, current People's Bank of China (PBOC) regulations set commission fee for supermarkets and department stores at one percent of transaction value.

In order to encourage further use of banking cards, the PBOC has decided to lower card commission fees to 0.8 percent of transaction value for most businesses starting March 1. Supermarkets, gas stations and airline ticket offices will receive beneficial treatment with a commission level of 0.4 percent.

Chinese Farmers Question Japanese Seed IPR Protection

By Zhao Hongyi

Lu Baijun, a resident of Cixi, Zhejiang Province, has for years earned a good living exported vegetables to Japan. However, this year, he is afraid that profits could turn to losses following new demands by the Japanese government that vegetable exporters pay fees for seeds that originated or were developed in Japan.

His company, Cixi Vegetables Development Co., runs a small vegetable processing plant that exports 10,000 tons of dehydrated vegetables each year, 80 percent of which goes to Japan. Japanese importers have long insisted that Lu's enterprise use seeds from Japan to ensure the produce will meet Japanese consumers' tastes.

That did not present a problem until the Japanese government set a regulation last November requiring all foreign users of seeds from Japan to pay intellectual property rights fees. Japanese importers of products from Chinese exporters that have not paid these fees can face fines of 3 million to 100 million Yen (approximately 234,00 yuan to 7.8 million yuan) and up to three years in prison. The new regulation takes effect on April 1.

"It's a new type of trade protectionism," Lu complained, as quoted in *Beijing Youth Daily* last week.

Chen Zhifu, chairman of the Ningbo Plants Processing Industrial Confederation, agrees. "The

new regulation is targeted at China's agricultural exports to Japan," he said. China is the largest exporter of agricultural products to Japan, and most such products are grown from seeds brought in from Japan.

"These fees will further squeeze our limited profits," added Chen.

Mao Peicheng, vice president of Haitong Food Group Co., which exports 'Kaiz' brand food products to Japan, is not concerned about the new regulations.

"The Japanese have imposed barriers to our products from time to time," Mao said, "But we have overcome most of the difficulties. The best way to respond is to optimize our own products."

Self-labeled Brands Pave Way for Retailers

By James Liu

Domestic chain store companies are developing a growing number of goods under their own brand-names as a way to survive increasingly stiff competition in the retail sector.

Though the branding business model was introduced by international retail giants like Carrefour and Auchan, Chinese discount stores are moving quickly to develop self-labeled products likely priced lower than their foreign rivals.

Pei Shengxi, manager of Auchan's Beijing branch, told *Beijing Business Today* on Decem-

ber 31 that most of the time, products under a retailer's own brand carry relatively low prices.

The B&Q home improvement superstore on the West Fourth Ring Road in Haidian District stocks more than 300 products carrying its own label. Chen Haiyan from the retailer's marketing department said that B&Q brand products are priced 20 to 30 percent below competing products on the market. "We will offer customers a new series of products every three months," he told *Beijing Today*.

However, none of these retailers have any expressed intention of entering manufacturing. They

simply order the goods from manufacturers and have their labels put on the products.

"It is one of the effective ways to differentiate a retailer from rivals," said Glen Murphy, managing director of ACNielsen China, at a symposium on China's retail sector held last October. "The traditional method of store expansion and retailer consolidation may not be sufficient to cope with an increasingly competitive retail market at present. Costs are comparatively lower for private labeled products, as retailers buy goods directly from select suppliers in large quantities with simple packaging."

Beck's Is Back

By Zhao Hongyi

Belgium-based Interbrew, the world's fourth largest beer producer, announced the return of its Beck's beer label to China this year following its withdraw from the domestic market a decade ago, according to a report in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* on December 31 last year.

The company has announced plans to directly import several of its premium beer

brands into this country and focus on the markets of southern and eastern China, particularly Shanghai and Guangzhou. As quoted in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* article, a company spokesman in Brussels explained that those cities have been targeted because "luxury consumption is rising in those areas."

Interbrew entered the China market in 1984 and has provided technical support to

Beijing's Five Star and Guangzhou's Zhujiang beer brands. In 1997, it started steps to own stakes in domestic brewing and has acquired shares in the Nanjing, Jingling, KK, Lion and Pearl River brands.

Ten years ago, Brauerei Beck & Co., the original owner of Beck's, began brewing the beer in Wuhan, Hubei Province. However, due to poor internal management, the label was hammered by the proliferation of cheap domestic brands. Brauerei Beck sold the China joint venture to US-based Anheuser-Busch for \$50 million and pulled out of the domes-

tic market in 1995. In 2001, it unloaded the entire Beck's brand to Interbrew for \$2.24 billion.

The import flow is likely to be short-lived as a result of China's high taxes on imported beer. Most foreign companies have moved to domestic production or acquiring shares in Chinese breweries in order to share in the profits of China's massive beer market. Interbrew is expected to follow a similar strategy, as many market analysts have predicted the company may purchase shares in Zhejiang Province-based Lion Beer.

First Joint Life Insurer Opens Local HQ

By Su Wei

The ceremony for the launch of Skandia-BSAM Life Insurance, held at the China Millennium Monument on Wednesday, marked the start of business for the first joint venture life insurance company headquartered in Beijing. Later that day, Chinese movie star Pu Cunxin and basketball superstar Yao Ming put in reservations to purchase policies from the firm.

The joint venture was established by Skandia Insurance, a Swedish company specializing in long term savings and protection, and Beijing State-Owned Assets Management, a company directly managed by the Beijing Municipal Government which operates in a wide range of fields. The two sides each hold equal 50 percent shares in the venture.

Skandia-BSAM is giving priority to unit-linked insurance products in the Chinese market, with a focus on providing broad and long-term savings and investment solutions for both individuals and institutions. Unlike most insurers that use agency models, Skandia-BSAM will co-operate with local companies under the principle of mutual development and benefit.

According to a statement made by Beijing Vice Mayor Lu Hao at the opening ceremony, in 2002, insurance sales in the capital surpassed 26 billion yuan, with life insurance accounting for 16 billion yuan. "Looking forward 25 years, I am sure that Skandia in China, along with our partners, will be successful in what I am sure by then will be the largest insurance market in the world," added Alan Wilson, Skandia executive president.

Certificates Required for Travel Service Management

By Zhao Hongyi

In a notice issued on December 29, the Beijing Tourism Administration (BTA) urged managers of local companies in the travel services industry to obtain qualification certificates in the new year or risk dismissal from their posts in keeping with a previously released regulation.

It was the latest of the local watchdog organization's steps to consolidate and upgrade the quality of the personnel and services in the tourism industry. The explosion of small and medium-sized travel agencies over the past several years has been attributed to causing a general decrease in tourism management quality.

Of the 2,526 managers registered in Beijing, nearly 46 percent do not possess proper certification, which requires passing a written examination.

The certificates comes in four types, covering general managers and division chiefs for domestic and overseas travel services.

There are currently over 15,500 people working in the travel industry in Beijing, according to latest surveys released by the administration.

First Europe-Guangzhou Air Route Opens

By Sun Ming

On Monday, Air France launched a new Paris to Guangzhou direct air route.

The route makes the French airline the first European carrier to fly to the largest city in southern China. Air France already operates direct flights from the French capital to Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai.

"Air France has been a forerunner in China for a long time," said Jean-Cyril Spinetta, Air France Chairman, on Monday in Guangzhou. "Air France was the first western airline to operate services to China, with the Paris-Shanghai route in 1966 and the Paris-Beijing route in 1973. Today Air France is once again the first European carrier to serve Guangzhou, and Europe's first airline to serve four destinations in China."

China Southern and Air France signed a code-sharing agreement in Guangzhou on November 26 last year to cover the Paris-Guangzhou route.

Direct flights between Paris and Guangzhou currently fly five times a week and service will go daily on June 14.

Bribery Case Rocks IBM



AFP Photo

Seoul, January 5 (Reuters) - Some 48 South Korean government officials and corporate executives, mainly from IBM ventures, were charged with bribery in a case involving state contracts for computer parts and servers, prosecutors said

on Monday.

The indictments followed an investigation into allegations that executives at IBM Korea, a wholly owned unit of US computer firm International Business Machines Corp., and LGIBMPC Corp., a joint venture with Korea's LG Electronics Inc., had bribed government officials to bag the deals.

The Seoul District Prosecutor's Office said in a faxed statement that IBM Korea had won orders for servers and PC parts worth 51 billion won (\$42.68 million) and LGIBMPC Corp. had won orders worth 870 million won through the illegal collusive action.

"IBM Korea and LGIBMPC Corp. bribed computer-related department officials at state-run corporations and colluded with them in auctions to

supply servers and PC parts," the statement said.

IBM Korea issued a statement saying that the action of some employees violated the firm's strict code of business conduct.

President Roh Moo-hyun has pledged to clamp down on corruption and shady business practices, with prosecutors spearheading a series of probes to cut ties between politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen.

IBM Korea began operating in 1967 and is one of the oldest foreign companies in South Korea.

The company leads South Korea's server market with a share of 39.4 percent, while LGIBMPC ranks fourth in Korea's PC and notebook market with a 10 percent share.

Analysts' Take:

Multinational companies have positive roles in stimulating capital flow, economic growth, trade promotion and job creation. But social values and principles are also vital aspects of development.

Government supervision and legal regulation are the main tools to keep order. But self-discipline is more important.

As 'economic animals', business entities, including multinationals, are always profit-driven. The legal environment in developed countries is believed to be more sophisticated. But economic and business scandals do happen.

— **Xin Houyuan, director of studies of multinational corporations, Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation**

PPL Therapeutics Sells Dolly

London, January 2 (AP) - PPL Therapeutics said it has sold the technology behind Dolly the cloned sheep to Exeter Life Sciences for 760,000 pounds.

The cash deal comes after the biotechnology company lost its battle with investors to keep going following the failure of its main lung drug programme.

The intellectual property used by PPL to create cloned sheep has never been used in any product development programmes - a confirmation that technological breakthroughs do not always translate into profits.

As well as cloning Dolly the sheep in 1996, PPL was the first company to announce it had cloned pigs capable of providing organs for humans.

Exeter Life Sciences is among a number of US firms awaiting a policy decision from the US Food and Drug Administration on whether milk and meat products from cloned cattle, pigs and goats are safe for consumers to eat. The outcome of the FDA review is expected later this year.

Analysts' Take:

True enough, applied and industrial use of cloning technologies still has a long way to go.

Some kinds of genetically modified crops are already being used for consumption, so long as the packaging is labeled. But cloned animals need more time to prove their safety.

Due to the relatively unsophisticated level of technology at the moment, malformations, dead embryos and miscarriages are common in our laboratory experiments. This makes the industrial production of cloned animals far from cost-effective.

In China, we are still relying on government budgets for the technology development.

— **Bai Xuejin, leading professor in the cloning project, Laiyang Agriculture College (The college produced China's first cloned calf last October 8.)**

The uses of cloned animals can be divided into the production of food for consumption, organs for transplant, and proteins for medical production.

Countries throughout the world are encouraging cloning technology development for medical production, though under heavy scrutiny. Foods and organs are still the two forbidden areas.

Industrialization of cloning technology has a long way to go because it is far from mature. But that does not mean the market cannot play a role. On the contrary, so long as we are able to produce safe products for sale, we can use the money generated to support the continuing development of the technology.

— **Yuan Sanping, general manager, Qingdao Samuel's Industrial and Commercial Co. (Samuel's cloned the first goat in China. The company is using the technology in producing proteins for medical production.)**



Beauty vs. Jewelry

Splendid jewelry is becoming a new export strength of India's economy. The country is expected to export \$10 billion worth of jewelry in the fiscal year of 2003-2004. The first jewelry fair of the new year was held in New Delhi, January 7.

Xinhua Photo

Egypt Crash Airline Denies Charges

Cairo, January 5 (AFP) - Flash Airlines, the Egyptian airline whose Boeing 737 crashed in the Red Sea at the weekend with the loss of all 148 people on board, denied Swiss accusations of safety failings.

Rejecting the Swiss charges that "serious shortcomings" had prompted a 15-month-old ban on its aircraft entering Swiss airspace, Flash Airlines managing director Mohamed Nour told AFP no failings had ever been found on either of its planes to justify the sanction.

He rejected the Swiss charge that the shortcomings found included maintenance problems with the engines and flight controls. Nour insisted the Swiss ban had nothing to do with safety, but was connected to the airline's failure to provide the necessary paperwork for its registration.

Switzerland is not the only country to have raised safety concerns about the air-



Rescue workers battled high waves to free bodies from the wreckage of an aircraft which crashed into the sea off the West African state of Benin, killing 139 people on December 25, 2003.

Reuters Photo

line. Airport officials in Athens said a Flash Boeing was forced to make an emergency landing there in October 2002 following an engine fire.

However Egyptian officials have leapt to the private charter carrier's defence and French Transport Minister Gilles de

Chile Signs Trade Deal With US

Santiago, January 2 (Dow Jones) - Roughly a decade after the two sides started talking about it, a free trade agreement between the US and Chile finally went into effect today.

The trade deal scraps tariffs on more than 85% of bilateral trade in consumer and industrial products immediately, with most remaining tariffs to be eliminated within four years. The deal was signed on June 6 after two years of talks and a decade after it was first discussed.

Bilateral trade, now \$3.6 billion a year, could jump to \$5 billion over the next three to four years, according to Chilean government estimates.

Chile's economy is heavily dependent on exports, with foreign trade accounting for two thirds of its gross domestic product. So far, the country exports primarily commodities such as fishmeal, bleached wood pulp and - above all - copper.

Chilean goods now enjoy duty-free status with most of the country's major industrialized partners but not in the fast-growing Asia-Pacific growth region - something the government hope to change.

(Stephan Kueffner)

Analysts' Take:

Bilateral free trade agreements have replaced the free trade blocs popular in the late 1990s, because they are easier to adopt and handle.

But a successful free trade agreement relies on the mutual benefits it brings.

Chile has adopted market-oriented economic reform since Pinochet took power in 1973. Since Chile transformed into a democratic political system in 1991, US and Chilean economic ties have developed further.

The US is pushing the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas. It has to deal with the South American Common Market and Andean Community, both of which Chile has close relations with. The US expects Chile to persuade the developing countries to participate.

Chile will send a delegation to Beijing for discussions on bilateral free trade next month.

— **Wang Xiaoyan, researcher of Chilean Studies, Institute of Latin American Studies, CASS**

Robien said Monday that Flash recently underwent successful tests in France and had a "good reputation".

Analysts' Take:

The latest statistics collected by the International Civil Aviation Organization show that 1,204 people died in air crashes in 2003, the lowest since 1945.

But the number of deaths in individual accidents has increased to an unprecedented level, including the 148 deaths in the Flash Airlines' crash in the Red Sea and 139 deaths in the crash of Guinea Airline's Boeing 727 at Cotonou Airport, Benin on December 25.

Flight safety demands attention from all parties in the aviation industry. Technological progress and excellent maintenance are the two main ways to prevent accidents.

— **Zhang Linli, director, air transportation management office, CAAC**



BusinessWeek Photo

BusinessWeek Names and Shames

New York, January 4 (Kyodo-News) - BusinessWeek picked the 20 "worst" managers, including Citigroup Chairman and CEO Sandy Weill and others once touted as good managers at big multinational firms.

The magazine also picked "best manager" for 2002, including Microsoft's Steven Ballmer, Toyota's president Fujio Cho, Sony Computer Entertainment's CEO Ken Kutaragi, and Canon's Fujio Mitarai.

The lists of the managers of the year are featured in the January 13 issue.

Blair Ready for Euro in 2007

London, January 7 (DeHaviland News) - Prime Minister Tony Blair wants Britain to adopt the European single currency in 2007, and wants his government to publicly affirm a target date, despite protestations from Gordon Brown, according to *The Independent* newspaper.

The newspaper says Blair will call a referendum soon after the next general election this year in order that the Treasury is given sufficient time to prepare the groundwork for the adoption of euro notes and coins.

Boeing Delivers 281 Civil Planes

Seattle, January 6 (AP) - Boeing Co. said it delivered 71 commercial airplanes in the fourth quarter of 2003, bringing its total for the year to 281 - a significant drop from 381 in 2002 and 527 in 2001.

The Chicago-based company is expected to be displaced by Europe's Airbus as the world's largest commercial jet manufacturer when Airbus reports its full-year figures. Airbus had delivered 263 planes through the third quarter.

Citigroup Sued in Parmalat Scandal

Parma, Italy, January 6 (Reuters) - Three financial companies involved in the Parmalat scandal are being sued by US lawyers.

Citigroup is charged with the creation of "Buconero" - Italian for "Black Hole" - that is used for loans among units in the Parmalat group.

The Italian affiliate of Deloitte audited Parmalat's group accounts, while Grant Thornton's Italian affiliate certified the Cayman Islands unit at the center of the scandal.

(Jacopo Barigazzi)



AFP Photo

Strikes Stump Alitalia

Rome, January 7 (AFP) - Italy's national airline Alitalia cancelled 334 flights on Thursday due to disruption by striking air traffic controllers and local transport workers.

The flight controllers trade union called an eight-hour work stoppage on Thursday to demand that their contracts, which expired two years ago, be renewed. Local transport workers are due to protest against the terms of a new contract signed last month on Friday.

Employees at Alitalia are also calling for a strike on January 19 to protest against a company restructuring plan that calls for 1,800 jobs to be eliminated.

Journalist Gets First New Marriage Certificate



Cui Jun and his wife Deng Tong

Photo by Wang Zhenlong

By Wang Xiaoxiao

New style marriage certificates have been put into use in Beijing since the first day of the new year and on that day, Cui Jun, a photo-journalist with *Beijing Youth Daily*, and his wife Deng Tong were the first two people in town to get the new documents.

That morning, before the Chaoyang

District Marriage Registration Office opened for work, a lot of couples hoping to receive new-version certificates on their first day of issue gathered in front of the office's doors.

Cui and Deng were among them. The two fell in love during the SARS period and decided to get married in November last year. Just a few days before New

Year's, Cui heard that the new marriage certificates would first be used in Beijing and set his mind to getting hold of the premier pair. "It was not easy," he recalled.

The couple laid careful plans, first heading to the Marriage Registration Office to book the first two certificates and then spending New Year's Eve in a guest house just upstairs from the office.

At around 9 am on January 1, in a solemn ceremony with surprisingly extensive press coverage, Cui and Deng received their cherished certificates from Meng Jun, vice director of the Beijing Civil Affairs Bureau. The certificates carry registry numbers 101 and 102 because the first 100 were kept by the government.

Cell Phone Strikes Back

By Zhang Ran

Director Feng Xiaogang's new hit movie *Cell Phone*, playing at cinemas nationwide, casts light on the dangers of cell phones to adulterers and the explosive results of deception between husbands and wives. Unfortunately, it apparently struck a dangerous nerve in a couple in Tianjin last week.

After watching the film at home, the two broke into a terrible argument that ended with the husband forcefully throwing his mobile phone at his wife's head. The blow landed her in the hospital with a mild concussion.

According to the Tianjin branch of Xinhua News Agency, the emergency room of the Tianjin No. 272 Hospital admitted an unconscious Cao Fang (pseudonym) at 2 pm on January 2. She had been knocked out cold by the cell phone launched by husband Tang Kai (pseudonym), who seemed very regretful. According to Tang, *Cell Phone* was the cause of all the trouble.

It all started when Tang and Cao bought a VCD copy of the movie, which tells the story of a man whose wife learns he is having an affair when she answers his mobile phone.

Once the movie film was over, Cao asked to check Tang's cell phone for traces of other women. Tang refused, only kindling his wife's curiosity. Cao refused to relent and began chasing her husband around their apartment, trying to grab his phone. When she failed, she got upset and cast their lunch off the dining table and onto the floor. Tang responded by flinging the phone with rage-driven power and accuracy.



Thousands braved the icy waters at Xiadu Park for the 26th Winter Swimming Competition on Sunday.

Brrrrrr!

By Guo Yuandan

Thick-skinned swimmers clamored to the 26th Winter Swimming Competition held at Xiadu Park in Yanqing County Sunday. The event was part of the ongoing Yanqing Ninth Ice and Snow Festival, which kicked

off last Thursday.

The competition pitted fearless swimmers in a challenge to cross the Gui River. Though this winter has been the warmest on record in decades, the river is still covered in ice. Thousands of swimmers showed up, the oldest of whom is 74 years old.

The Ice and Snow Festival also includes displays of huge ice sculptures, winter sports activities as well as sightseeing and folk art performances.

Photo by Zhou Jianqiang

Tracing the Steps of Marco Polo

By Su Wei

The modern landscape through which Marco Polo trekked more than 700 years ago is the subject of a new photography exhibition at the Cultural Office of the Italian Embassy that runs through the end of the month. All of the photos in the show, co-sponsored by Italian Embassy and the Association of Italian Returned Scholars, were taken at scenes Polo described in his journals, which were later published as *The Travels of Marco Polo*.

The pictures were taken single-handedly by Weng Yi, 69, vice chairman of the China Association for Expedition

since 1980. Weng's retracing of Polo's journey took him through 146 counties in 18 provinces, during which he took tens of thousands of photographs and kept extended notes on the contemporary conditions of places mentioned by his Italian predecessor.

He said that his own experiences confirm Polo's claims



Weng Yi

Photo by Aily

to have entered China through the Pamir Mountains, met Nestorian Christians at Kashgar and seen a castle instead of the Great Wall, claims that some scholars have argued indicate that the Italian traveler never actually came to this country.

Weng said he undertook the extended journey as a personal quest and without hopes for fame or wealth. "I'm happy that I have been able to show the public the truth, though there were times that it was hard, and once I wanted to give up because it was just too difficult. I am also satisfied that I have been able to do something to solidify Sino-Italian friendship," he added.

Six Killed in Multi-vehicle Accident

By James Liu

The first terrible traffic accident of the year, in which six people died and one was badly injured, occurred Monday afternoon on the South Fourth Ring Road. Nine vehicles were damaged in the accident, four of which were totaled. The accident jammed traffic along the highway for more than three hours as the police and rescue teams treated the injured and cleared the wreckage.

The incident began when a white truck heading east along the Fourth Ring Road rear-ended a Volkswagen Bora car at 12:50 pm. That contact sent the truck across the guardrails and directly into oncoming traffic on the other side of the road. Drivers in those lanes had no time to react.

The truck hit or was hit by a police SUV, two sedans, two minibuses, a cement truck and a fully-loaded truck. The driver of the white truck managed to run from the scene, but five people were killed instantly in the collisions and another died after being sent to the hospital. Only the driver of one of the sedans was lucky enough to come out of the incident unhurt.

More than 30 traffic police from Fengtai District were the first to arrive at the accident and were followed by rescue teams and firefighters. The firefighters brought special tools to cut through the smashed cars to get access to the injured and dead. Traffic resumed along the South Fourth Ring Road at 4:20 pm once the spot was cleared of debris.

The escaped truck driver, Wang Quanbao, is from Huailai, Hebei Province. At 5:30 pm, traffic police found the 39-year-old man eating dinner at his temporary home. He had packed all his things to continue his flight after the meal. Wang was then taken to the Fengtai traffic police station for questioning.



Two police officers were among those killed in Monday's nine-vehicle accident.

Money Crazy

By Chen Ying

Lottery fever has returned to the capital with the coming of the new year, and Beijingers have again shattered the national record for lottery ticket sales.

Since the first drawing of "double-colored balls" on January 1, lottery sales have exceeded 7.36 million yuan. That figure far surpasses the 980,000 yuan of sales drawn in when the game made its local debut on June 9 last year.

To capitalize on this popularity, the Beijing Sports Lottery Administration Center and Beijing Welfare Lottery Issuing Center are currently running eight totally different lottery drawings in Beijing. Last year, total ticket sales for the sports lottery hit 1.12 billion yuan, and 46 lucky locals became millionaires overnight. The welfare lottery posted sales of over 990 million yuan last year in Beijing and made another 40 people millionaires.

The relatively new nationwide double-color balls game seems slated to become the most popular form of lottery in Beijing, due in no small part to the fact that Beijingers won 150 million yuan in prizes in just the first six months of local play, more than anywhere else in China. Interest and sales are particularly likely to skyrocket since one person in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, won five top prizes at one time in the last drawing of 2003.

Sex, Extortion and Videotape

By Hans Leu

Zhou Yun (pseudonym), a 26-year-old art school student, was blackmailed to the tune of 100,000 yuan by an angry former boyfriend. After the two broke up, the young man threatened to release videotapes of them having sex if Zhou did not pay.

The police told the press last week that they arrested the man on December 28.

According to a report in Sunday's *Beijing Times*, Zhou met her former boyfriend through online chatting last March. One month later, they finally met in person and started a torrid affair.

Eight months later, Zhou decided to break it off, a move that devastated the young man. He tried repeatedly over the following month to rekindle their love, but only met with failure.

Finally, the desperate boy telephoned Zhou and said he had to show her something very important. That thing ended up being footage shot on the boy's video camera of them having sex. He said if Zhou did not cough up 100,000, he would upload the video to the Internet and send copies to her parents and friends.

To make the payment, Zhou had to borrow money from friends, but still only managed to scrape together 15,000 yuan. The boy was outraged and showed her another video that he threatened to express mail to her parents if he did not receive the rest of the money.

Zhou then turned to the police, and with their help, recorded the last threatening call from her ex-boyfriend, who demanded payment on December 28.

Local police were able to easily apprehend the blackmailing boy that same day when he arrived at the set place for the handover. Police officers found a knife in his pocket and several other sex tapes at his home.

The police are conducting further investigations into the case.

By Chen Ying

Happy about their living conditions and getting paid on time, four migrant workers decided to show their appreciation by presenting a silk banner to their employers, the Xi'an branch of Jiangsu Nantong No.6 Building Company, on December 26.

According to a report in Xi'an-based *Huashang Bao*, the four men, Wang Tiejun, Li Tao, Yang Hongjun and Li Jinquan, are all from the poverty-struck Taoxia Town of Hua County, Shanxi Province. With help from the newspaper, they began to work for the construction company since the middle of November last year. As they told the paper, they were treated well. The company provided them with the basic living necessities, including a washbasin, soap and bedding. And like other workers, their salary was about 750 yuan per month.

To show their gratitude, the four men sent a silk banner to the company, embroidered with the words "Helping and supporting the poor, caring about the people in poverty-struck areas".

It comes as something of a surprise, because non-payment of wages to migrant workers is a well known problem in China, especially in labor intensive industries like construction, catering and manufacturing.

Statistics from the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) show China has 94 million migrant rural laborers, whose wage arrears now total more than 100 billion yuan (US \$12.1 billion). Construction firms account for over 70 percent of wage defaults, followed by the catering industry.

In October last year, Premier Wen Jiabao tried to set an example by helping Xiong Deming, a peasant in Chongqing, get the wages she was owed.

News of this act of beneficence was spread far and wide through the nation's media. Local governments started taking measures to help migrant workers recover unpaid salary while the media put more energy into reporting on the issue.

Should the four migrant workers feel grateful for being paid their wages? What is the problem with the construction industry? Opinions follow:

Liu Baoqing, news commentator

Though the four workers got their salary on time, I still think their action is improper.

First of all, the four workers just got what they should get. It's not benefaction from the company but it shows how surprised they were to actually be paid. If they really want to express their thanks, they should put more energy into their work. This act of gratitude might cause a misunderstanding that paying wages to migrant workers is some kind of good deed. If this idea came into being, it would be even more difficult for them to get paid by employers.

Furthermore, the four workers are all from poverty-struck areas according to the news. They should be frugal. A silk banner may cost more than 100 yuan. So it's really rather a large expenditure for them.

Is there some other factor behind their action? It's just my conjecture, but today some administrations and industries pay more attention to image, intending to establish their credit and reputation.

Frankly, it is progress for the company to pay migrant workers' wages on time. The company is an example to others. But it would be better if the company could stop such shows of gratitude.

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The Internet has just thrown up a new kind of love, this time called "Spiritual Cohabitation". It's the name for an online role-playing game which has become popular among universities in Nanjing recently. Players have to provide some basic information about themselves but the commitment stops there. The game provides an environment in which the players see how they get along living with their cyber partner. Will love rule or will it all end in tears?

But warning voices are already making themselves heard. It's just a fantasy, they say. Spending too much time living outside the real world is dangerous and maybe this game could lead to twisted ideas about love and commitment. So why is the game so popular?

Some think that the games will satisfy students who wish to taste love but haven't had a chance. The game also helps those who are too shy to make anything happen in real life.

Still, some say this doesn't help gain a true understanding of love. And the game

Thanks Boss

Building workers in Xi'an show their gratitude for getting paid on time by delivering a silk banner to their construction company



Ma Youwu (left) from Anhui Province received his December salary on time while working at the Beijing No.5 Subway Line. Photo by Photocom

Any project without sufficient capital should not be allowed to start. Local governments should set up long-term mechanisms to solve the problem and avoid new cases of delayed payment. For this year, migrant workers may be able to get their salary thanks to Wen Jiabao's speech. But how about next year?

— Xie Lihua, secretary-general of the Cultural Development Center for Rural Women

Xie Lihua, secretary-general of the Cultural Development Center for Rural Women

Though it's good to hear that those four workers could get their salary on time, this is still pretty sad. After all, it's simply what they deserve.

I think the key is to get local governments to set an example. It's time to deal with or cancel governmental projects where there are severe cases of wage default. And they should stop all so-called governmental image projects. For a long time, local governments constructed advanced office buildings though they hadn't sufficient budgets for them. The victims were always the construction workers who just weren't paid. The workers might be able to take legal measures to get their salary if they're employed by real estate companies, but it's hard for them to claim their money if the defendant is the government.

Meanwhile, any project without sufficient capital should not be allowed to start. Local governments should set up long-term mechanisms to solve the problem and avoid new cases of de-

layed payment. For this year, migrant workers may be able to get their salary thanks to Wen Jiabao's speech. But how about next year?

A great number of projects will start in the following days in Beijing for the 2008 Olympics Games. If our government can't take effective and strict measures to manage them, the situation will become worse.

A lawyer, requesting anonymity, in charge of consulting for Beijing Legal Aid Center's hotline

Many migrant workers have called the hotline about the payment default issue, most of them construction workers. In my mind, most migrant workers still know little about their rights. They don't take any legal measures for a long time after not being paid. They would rather believe blindly that their employer will give them their money eventually. According to the law, it becomes harder for them to get their salary back if they spend more time waiting to take action. And they'll lose all the money they're owed if the case is beyond the prescribed period for litigation.

Beijing Issues New Regulation to Protect Workers' Rights

Beijing Salary Disbursement Regulation issued by Beijing Municipal Bureau of Labor and Social Security will be put into practice from January 22.

According to the new regulation, a company can postpone payment of salary to employees on the basis of slow production and poor management. But it should explain this to employees and get agreement from the la-

bor union or the employees' representatives. All of this should take no more than 30 days.

The regulation also requires large-scale companies to put aside part of their capital in special bank accounts. If salary default is exposed, a company must use this fund to pay the due salaries as well as an extra 25 percent in compensation.

Some Kind of Love

has already revealed many of the problems that players have: their doubts about emotion, and their desire to escape from responsibility and morality. So is this kind of thing healthy? Opinions follow:

Huang Yan, 23, a student of Renmin University

We know it's just a game! We play many kinds of games during our spare time, and so long as it doesn't affect our studies, just play it! It's just a way to relax. As to the reason why the game is so popular around the universities, I guess that's because we have much more spare time than those who have to work.

Xu Shengsan, psychologist, Shandong Institute of Education

Young people are always trying to imitate what adults do. And when they don't have the chance, like marrying someone, the online game of course turns up and gives them an oppor-

tunity to experience what they can't yet have. However, I don't think this kind of game will do anything good for young people, especially for the health of their bodies and minds. The school and parents should teach them to make the right use of the Internet.

A student in Nanjing

I don't have a house, a job or that much money. And I don't have a girlfriend. But I wish that I had a girlfriend and that we could live together. So Spiritual Cohabitation is just what I need. If the real thing is not possible, why can't I have a girlfriend on the internet? We can talk with each other about our ups and downs. It is like a medicine for me and makes my boring life colorful. I don't care whether the girl I "married" is beautiful or ugly because I can imagine everything, so beautiful, so tall and so kind, just as I wish.

Zhang Liping, a mother

I've been objecting to this cyberlove all along. I just can't understand why all these children would believe their cyber partners' descriptions of themselves. And they are moved easily and tell their net friends everything, including their home telephone number and information about themselves. We hear about criminal cases committed through the Internet all the time; the criminals were all the "nice" net friends who later stole your cell phones, money and even murdered you in order to take your possessions.

Ross Robinson, from New Zealand

I always chat on the internet, but just with my friends. I don't have any interest in chatting with strangers. Online games are also popular here, but we are not wild about the idea of "marrying" each other on the Internet. I guess we should analyze why it's popular in China. It might have something to do with the campus life. If their life was not so boring, maybe the students would spend more time doing other things.

Readers & Leaders

Changing Chinese Education

By Shida Zhu

Lin Yu-tang, the renowned Chinese essayist and philosopher, once said that he hoped to see liberal education in China. He was taking American education as a contrast to the Chinese form that stressed uniformity of ideas and study from books.

As an educator, I felt extremely sorry when I saw my niece, an 18-year-old girl, studying until midnight every day before taking the national university examination, the single-plank wooden bridge to college, so to speak. In the last year of senior high school, she spent almost all her time learning by rote politics, history and other subjects. The girl who should have been lively and active had no time for games, fun or sports.

It's different in America. Though it still calls for hard work to get into the Ivy League universities, the students can have their fun as well, attending football or baseball games and weekend student parties if they wish. The students are generally more relaxed and comfortable before they enter university.

I believe there is something wrong with our way of education.

American universities, in recruiting new students, set great store by their social work and inventive ideas, in addition to their performance in scholastic aptitude tests (SAT). It is this sense of comprehensive quality and ability, instead of just book knowledge, that matters.

When I once visited the family of Kurt Watkins, a roommate of mine, in Dayton, Ohio, I found something like a kite in one of the rooms and I asked my friend what it was. He told me that it was his sister's work as part of the students' inventive efforts in senior high and was slated for a competition in the Dayton area. She later applied for the renowned Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was admitted, partly on account of the success of her invention.

This recruitment policy ensures that students are good at thinking on their own, instead of just copying ideas from books. This makes it easier for them to cope with life beyond university.

At college, the students are allowed to grow freely in terms of intellectual study. They live in a scholastic environment with the choice of a wealth of seminars on a great variety of topics. For instance, on any given day, students might be able to choose between attending seminars on Sappho's odes, Swedish film or Indian architecture.

American universities seek to make their student body as international as possible. Consequently, the campus is a testing ground for all kinds of ideas. For instance, Kofi Anan, the UN secretary general, Nelson Mandela, the former South African President, and George Soros, the international financier, have all come to Harvard to deliver speeches, as have many other international statesmen, scientists and artists. There is no final moral judgment of any of the statements or ideas expressed.

I was given to understand that in addition to book learning, the students should be taught to cultivate an innovative mind. When Neal Rudenstein, then the president of Harvard University, said that Harvard is devoted to training artists as scientists and scientists as artists, I came to fully understand the meaning of a liberal education. The borders of academic departments are not strictly marked as a forbidden city. Students may choose courses beyond their own department of learning. Those who major in sciences may attend classes in drama, film or arts and vice versa. I once attended a performance of a play by Pirandello at the Experimental Drama House in Cambridge, Massachusetts by students of sciences as well as humanities. The performance was superb.

Such liberal education paves the way to a wider vision and horizon for the students in the future. The students are exposed to a great variety of activities, instead of sticking to rigidly defined subjects. Trained in such a liberal environment in their formative years, they may have great opportunities to develop intellectually on their own and are more determined and resolute in character and more innovative in mind.

(The writer is a senior research fellow of the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.)

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The views expressed in this column are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect the editorial stance of Beijing Today.

By Su Wei

A car suddenly stopped in front of the gate of Beijing Hospital on the afternoon of December 13, and a body was thrown out. The dead man was Huang Lirong, a private investigator for a Beijing business information consulting company. Seven days later, the two suspects in his killing, Zhao Jun and Yang Zhanli, were arrested by police of Dongcheng branch of Beijing Public Security Bureau.

Watching the Detectives

Photoby Photocome

An investigator on duty in Chongqing

They confessed they beat Huang to death after they found he was investigating Zhao's social status.

The death of Huang Lirong raised several issues, one of which was the fact that "investigators" in China operate in grey areas of the law and often face considerable danger and hostility from those whose affairs they are looking into. In theory, it's not even legal for private detective firms to operate at all but that hasn't stopped the growth of a significant number of them. And as demand grows, so is pressure for legal recognition of the industry.

Just a few days before Huang's death, the China 2003 Summit of Investigation Industry Cooperation and Development was held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, aiming to

deal with some of the questions and doubts about the Chinese private investigation industry.

According to the summit, there are more than 2,000 companies engaged in investigative business in China, with a total of over 10,000 employees.

Who are these private dicks?

In 1993, Meng Guangang, head of a police station in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, founded one of the first investigation firms in China, Liaoning Kedun Investigation Office, with several retired senior police officials and a few students.

There are now around 30 full time and 60 temporary employees in his office. Meng says being brave, intelligent and physically strong are basic requirements to be an investigator. "But the most important one is that they must be familiar with relevant laws, which is not only crucial to get evidence through investigations but also to prevent any legal violation during investigations. In fact, I think it would be more accurate to call them legal experts."

Major (retired) P. Kalastree, Managing Director of Singapore-based Mainguard Security Services, a leading security and private investigations firm, says experience is the key. "Having a wide range of experience in different industries, and a strong network of contacts is very useful. No skills and experience are wasted in the investigations profession."

Xu Min, director of Zhejiang XM Lawyers' Office and initiator of the 2003 summit, emphasizes the importance of professional ethics. "Though the aim of the industry is to protect victims' rights, if investigators do not stick to professional ethics it could cause great harm to society," he said.

Conducting an investigation

Zhou Mi (pseudonym), has been working for an investigation company in Chongqing for one year, following her graduation from the South West Politics and Law University.

She has been investigating one man for almost one month. "He looks like a careless person but I cannot detect anything suspicious," Zhou said. She says although each time she is excited to finish her investigation and present evidence to her clients she feels tired during the investigation. "I have to adjust my way of life in order to follow people. For example, I have to stay up in the early morning in singing halls if the person I'm investigating is killing time there. And I have to keep alert all the time in order not to miss an opportunity to get evidence," she said. "Although I frequently change my clothes and make-up to avoid being spotted, if the investi-

gation lasts more than one month, my boss will ask another investigator to take my place to avoid any risk of being exposed," Zhou said.

She recalls her first investigation when she was looking into a group of people making fake products. "Just when I began to follow one of the men, he suddenly turned back and walked directly towards me, staring at me," she said. "I was so frightened I could hardly breathe. I almost decided to turn back and run. But I suddenly remembered that we were trained never to do so. Thank God nothing happened."

Equipment used by investigators has long been an issue of debate, especially among legal experts. All the investigators interviewed by *Beijing Today* claim that they only use common equipment which is available to the public.

Xu Min says that as a lawyer he knows it is illegal to use some equipment such as bugs or miniature video cameras. "But without such equipment our business suffers," he said. "I think if the intention to use such equipment is not bad, it should not be treated as illegal. However legislation lags behind practice."

There are no unified price standards set by investigation companies in China. An investigation company near Fuchengmen, Xicheng District, Beijing, charges between 3,000 and 5,000 yuan to find out if a husband or wife is having an affair. A financial investigation costs 10,000 yuan. Prices in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, are between 1,500 and 2,000 yuan per week.

Market demand

"I spent two years looking for him in vain, but the investigation company found him within two months," said Wang Li, who was deserted by her husband after she was injured in a fire accident in 1996.

A conspiracy to get higher insurance coverage by an insurance company's salesman and his client company was exposed a couple of weeks after Zhanghua (pseudonym), general manager of the company in Chongqing, entrusted a company to investigate. He had suspected something was happening for over one year. "But I could not question the salesman in public. I did not want to be sued for defamation," he said.

Xu says that after the Supreme Court announced regulations on evidence in civil lawsuits in April 2002, plaintiffs who fail to provide sufficient evidence will be liable for all the costs incurred. "But in cases involving affairs, how can someone collect evidence to sue, even if they know an affair is taking place? What will they do when police are not entitled to investigate or they themselves lack the ability to investigate? Can we allow their legal rights to be violated?"

A judge in Beijing, requesting not to be named, told *Beijing Today*

that in most civil cases, they usually take it for granted that evidence gathered by investigation companies is valid. "We are aware the evidence is gathered secretly and illegally. But what can we say when it is presented in court? In some cases it is the only evidence there is," he said.

"The demand for investigation is rising in China. Some social problems which were not exposed during the planned economy have begun to come out," Xu said. "Another reason is that in China legal administration departments do not have the obligation to provide individual investigation services."

"When the government fails to protect individual rights and does not allow its people to solve problems on their own, rights cannot be protected and victims are not compensated. This will cause anger towards the judiciary, the government and even society," Meng warned.

"My major was law. I know what violation of privacy is and I know that an individual does not have the right to investigate someone else, though the law does not say that clearly," said Zhang, an investigator in Guizhou. He referred to the notice delivered in 1993 by the Ministry of the Public Security which forbids the opening of any non-governmental detective institutions. "But there so many people requesting our company to conduct investigations. I think there is no reason to say that our existence is unreasonable since the public really need it."

A prosperous future?

Kalastree says the investigative market in China is booming. "Over the next few years, we will see a growth in commercial investigations in China as more foreign firms enter the market and there are more joint venture agreements with Chinese companies overseas. Concerns of western investors in China include the abundance of counterfeit goods, intellectual property breaches, shipping and other commercial fraud cases. There are many opportunities for Chinese investigators to work on assignments combating these activities," he said.

Xu says it is understandable that any new industry will have some problems but a self-discipline association for the industry and laws set by the government are needed to regulate the industry, train professionals and set standards.

Meng says he is confident the government will help in promoting the development of the investigation industry in China. "In recent years the Ministry of Public Security has modified and even abolished some of its regulations. So there is no reason for me to believe that the notice forbidding 'detective institutions' will remain in the future."

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Nestlé Sued Over GM Labeling



Photo by Zhou Yan

By James Liu

Zhu Yanling, who became the first Chinese person to sue Shanghai Nestlé for not labeling genetically modified (GM) food in their products on June 2, filed her second lawsuit against the company at the People's Court of Hongkou District on December 29. Zhu accuses Nestlé of having "dual standards" for consumers in Asia and those in Europe and says Chinese consumers should be granted the equal right to know when choosing products.

Wu Dong, Zhu Yanling's lawyer, told *Beijing Today* that his client asked the Shanghai Nestlé and Changning Branch of Shanghai Lianhua Supermarket to pay her a symbolic 16 yuan in compensation, twice the amount she spent on a packet of Nesquik on August 1 last year. More importantly, Zhu wants Nestlé to start labeling its GM products.

Yesterday Zhu Yanling and Wu Dong attended a seminar in Shanghai titled Consumer's Right to Know about GM Food, discussing the "right to know" with experts from the fields of environmental protection, the judiciary and international trade.

The trigger for the lawsuits was a packet of Nesquik brand instant chocolate bought by Zhu for her son on March 27. The packet contained no information about GM ingredients. Later, she heard from the Internet and newspapers that the product contained GM ingredients.

The news was the result of an investigation by Greenpeace China. The Shanghai Academy of Agricultural Science also confirmed that the product Zhu bought contained GM ingredients.

As a former student who had studied in Switzerland from 1995 to 1997, Zhu was familiar with Nestlé's labeling of GM ingredients in Europe and took it for granted that it was doing the same in China. Thus Zhu asked the Second Intermediate People's Court to order Nestlé to label its Nesquik brand instant chocolate drink as a GM food.

In a recent newsletter to Chinese media, Nestlé said it placed GM labels on its products "in some European countries according to their laws and regulations". The company said that this action was not a "double standard" but reflected the fact that "Nestlé is a law-abiding and responsible company."

Determined to break Nestlé's silence, Zhu Yanling boarded a flight from Shanghai to Zurich in Switzerland on December 12 to take her complaint about non-labeling of GM food to the company's headquarters. In an open letter to Nestlé, she said she was fighting for the right to be informed whether food is genetically modified or not. "Customers should have the right to choose what kind of food they buy," said Zhu. Zhu and her attorney met with two deputy presidents of the Swiss food producer but they denied any wrongdoing or having any double standards. Also they defended the use of GM food ingredients, saying they were perfectly safe.

He Tong of Nestlé (China) Ltd said the company is confident it will win the case, but she refused to confirm whether Nesquik contained GM ingredients.

The trial date for the two lawsuits has not yet been decided.

As Zhu was waiting for the trial, unexpected events occurred. At the request of Shanghai Nestlé, the Second Intermediate People's Court ordered Shanghai Academy of Agricultural Science to conduct another check on Nesquik and the result found that it did not contain any GM ingredients. In the statement delivered by the Academy on December 17, it stated that the sample they checked, using the qualitative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) method for soybean, did not reveal any GM ingredients. However, this result differed from the Academy's findings made on August 13 on the same product when GM contents were identified.

Wu Dong told *Beijing Today* that the different results had not shaken their determination to continue the lawsuit. This is partly because they had a sample from the Nesquik package Zhu Yanling bought tested by GeneScan Analytics GmbH, an independent gene analysis center. Their test found GM ingredients in the Nesquik. The ingredients, according to GeneScan Analytics GmbH, were a kind of soya produced by biotech giant Monsanto.

Though genetically modified foods have been widely adopted around the world, they remain highly controversial. Proponents of GM foods argue they could solve the world's hunger problem by producing crops that are resistant to drought and pests. But scientists have raised concerns about the long-term effects of GM foods on the human body as well as the possibility that modified crops could cross-pollinate with natural varieties with unpredictable effects.

Labeling of GM foods is also a controversial subject around the world. While Europe has passed strong laws requiring GM foods to be clearly labeled, in countries like Canada and the United States the laws are not nearly as strict, despite calls from many consumers for mandatory regulations.

The laws on edible processed products in China are constantly evolving. So far, only agricultural products are strictly required to be labeled if they have been genetically modified. For instance, plant oil sold in China must be identified if it has any GM ingredients. But the Law on Protection of Consumer's Rights states consumers have the right to know the basic constituents of the product they are buying and how they have been produced.

Yang Changju, a professor from Renmin University, pointed out at the seminar in Shanghai that the reason Nestlé are so eager to use GM ingredients is that they can cut production costs hugely. "Nestlé is taking this chance as China does not yet have a complete labeling system," he said.

Zhu Yanling and Wu Dong stand by their accusations that Nestlé doesn't trust Chinese consumers to make up their own minds about GM products. Also they dispute Nestlé's claim that the reason they don't sell so many GM products in Europe is because European farmers don't plant GM crops. "Actually it is because of the strong opposition from European consumers to GM products," Zhu said.

Giant Panda Found in Chengdu

By Hou Mingxin/Jiang Hao

On January 6, 2004 a twenty-year-old male giant panda was found stranded in the snow at Xiling Snow Mountain, Dayi County, in Sichuan Province. The panda, which weighs about 60 kilograms, was very weak because of malnutrition. But treatment was administered and the Panda will be released back into the wild as soon as it recovers.

What's that?

At 2 pm on January 6, Yao Nin, Xiong Dongke, Qing Song and Zhong Xi, all coaches at the Xiling Skiing Resort, were on their way to the top of the mountain by cablecar. When they reached Curve 8 of the cableway (2380 meters above sea level), 21-year-old Qing Song suddenly saw something black and white lying in the snow. "Wow, it must be a giant panda!" he said. In order to make sure of what they had seen, the men got out of the cable car, skied down to the bottom and took the cable car up again. This time they were sure and they reported it to the managers of the resort. Tourists started to hear about the news and came over for a look at the national treasure. Zhou Zhenzhang, deputy general manager of the ski resort, immediately sent workers to protect the site and prevent the giant panda from becoming frightened.

Meanwhile, the resort reported the find to the Dayi County Forestry Bureau. At 4:40 pm, seven people from the Bureau arrived in the resort. A rescue team of over 40 people from the county forestry

Bureau, Heishuihe Nature Reservation, the ski resort and Xiling Township Government was set up to rescue the panda. The rescuers climbed to the site with a three-meter-long and two-meter-wide safety net. Wei Liao, deputy head of the Wild Animal Protection Department of Dayi County Forestry Bureau, touched the back of the panda. The panda raised his head which was buried in the snow, gave out low groans and then buried his head again in the snow again. Wei concluded that the panda could not walk because of cold and hunger and decided that it should be taken to the foot of the mountain for observation. But suddenly the panda leaped up and ran off into the bushes.

The rescuers set up a 50-meter-wide encirclement line and gradually narrowed the line and finally found the exhausted panda in the bushes. The rescuers cast the net for a second time and caught the panda. Now came the tricky part: moving it.

Teams of four people took turns to carry the panda down with steel bars supporting the net. But they soon became exhausted and tried to use a snowmobile to carry the animal down. But once seated in the snowmobile, the panda struggled to escape. So the rescuers reverted to carrying him down. When he finally arrived in the Administration Building, he was taken to a special room. Under the guidance of the experts, workers of the ski resort brought him apples and some bamboo leaves. When seeing the panda eating the apples, the rescuers felt hugely relieved.

He's okay!

At 9 am on January 7, three experts from Wolong Giant Panda Base arrived at Xiling Snow Mountain. Experts from the City Forestry Bureau also turned up. The expert panel examined the panda and later that day held a brief press conference.

Huan Xinjun, deputy director of Dayi County Forestry Bureau, told reporters the panda had been named Xiling Snow. He was still very weak and was suffering certain diseases, but the symptoms were not too serious. Medicines were prescribed and further check-ups and treatment will be carried out.

Wei Liao said that in 24 hours from January 6 to January 7, the panda ate 1.5 kilograms of apples, 0.5 kilograms of corn paste and 0.5 kilograms of milk. Under normal circumstances, one mature panda can eat more than five kilograms of apples and kilos of bamboo leaf in the same time.

Back to nature

The expert panel decided Xiling Snow should be kept on the site for two or three more days of observation. If he recovers well, he will be sent back into nature. If the recovery is not so satisfactory, he will be taken to Wolong Giant Panda Base for

medical treatment.

To see if there are any other pandas suffering from frostbite or going hungry in the area, Dayi County Forestry Bureau organized 45 people divided into three groups to search an area of four square kilometers around the ski resort.

Xiling Snow Mountain is an ideal environment for the growth of giant pandas. Pandas were found in this area in the 1960s. During the 1980s and 1990s many of them were seen roaming nearby.

According to Wei Liao, there are more than ten thousand acres of bamboo growing in Xiling Snow Mountain. The highest altitude is 5348 meters and the climate is humid all year round. All these factors make the place ideal for giant pandas.



Hungry panda tucks in.

Photo provided by Chengdu Shangbao



By Darlene Lee

Hasi has danced for as long as he can remember. At the ripe old age of 8, he won his first dance competition at a local break-dance contest in his home of Uxin Banner, Inner Mongolia. "I was known for years as that Hasi that won the dance competition," he laughingly recalls. "I couldn't sit still for a minute. My father always said that if I didn't choose dance, he was going to send me to martial arts school," he says. The threat seemed to work. Just 25, Hasi has already worked with some of the best known artists and dance companies in China, as

Slave to the Rythm

well as performing abroad.

No doubt

Despite limited financial resources, his family scraped together money for him to pursue his passion for dance. Shortly after Hasi celebrated his 13th birthday, he secured a place at the competitive High School of Performing Arts in Dongsheng city and left home to continue his studies. "Although most of us students were so poor that we barely had enough to eat, being able to focus on dance while surrounded by others equally passionate about the arts was a kind of luxury," he says.

Surprising everyone but himself, he passed his university exams after graduating and went on to earn his degree in dance from the Central Minorities University in Beijing. "I wasn't exactly the most studious kid on the block," says Hasi, "so everyone was a bit shocked that I actually passed my exams. But I always knew that I'd get in as I have always been very focused. I knew I'd earn my degree in dance and that modern dance was what I wanted to do with my life."

His decision to pursue modern dance was somewhat unusual. "Though we have a rich tradition of song and dance in Mongolian culture," Hasi explains, "the path for dancers

usually leads to folk dancing, traditional Mongolian dances. This wasn't the artist I wanted to be. I wanted to be at the cutting edge of cultural development so modern dance was the only choice for me."

The university didn't offer a modern dance program so Hasi sometimes skipped school to attend classes led by Willy Cao, the newly-arrived artistic director at the prestigious Beijing Modern Dance Company (BMDC). Cao was so impressed with Hasi's commitment that he was invited as the only student to perform in the company's first official performance under Cao.

Following graduation, Hasi joined the BMDC as a principal. "It's been my good fortune to work with people like Willy," says Hasi. "He has a long-term vision for modern dance in China, and he has been committed to its development all his life. His classes are great. They're all improvised so you keep the freshness and energy of movement despite doing classes day after day," he says.

An individual step

Though modern dance has numerous devotees across the world, there are still plenty of people who don't quite get it, especially in China. "Modern dance is just starting to reach the mainstream in China so when I tell people what I do, they are more likely to think of Britney Spears or Madonna rather than the giants of modern dance like Martha Graham or Paul Cunningham."

There's an important difference between classical and

modern dance, Hasi says.

"Modern dance is primarily about three things: a reflection of the issues in today's society, freedom to express a more individual style and message, and an interactive element with the audience. The incentive to draw out one's core values and make it relevant to contemporary issues is why I love modern dance so much," he adds.

Much of Hasi's choreography draws on the shamanistic traditions of Mongolian culture. "Growing up in the wide open spaces of Inner Mongolia gives me a rich resource, to bring this expansiveness into a contemporary context," he says. Having been trained in traditional Mongolian and other ethnic folk dancing, he often incorporates these elements into his modern dance choreography. Hasi premiered several of his own choreographed works while with the BMDC, including *Thorough and Calmly Burning*.

"My work is about being in action despite the obstacles. It's about not being afraid, even though one knows the risks or dangers. The work seeks to inspire others to go after what they love," Hasi says of his own choreography. "I'm always exploring ways to bring the wisdom of ancient cultures into daily modern life, as well as

ways to reawake the Mongolian idea of an intimate connection with nature and the universe. So my work tends to be very emotional, both when creating it and watching it. I want audiences to respond viscerally to the movements," Hasi says.

An international language

When not collaborating with international dance companies visiting Beijing, Hasi has toured in such far-flung places as Australia, Canada, and France with the BMDC including performances with Cui Jian in a sold-out Hong Kong rock dance fest in 2000. "Dance, like all art, is a universal language. So despite the fact that not many people in the company speaking much English, we still managed to exchange ideas, make friends and have a lot of fun when working with fellow dancers from abroad," says Hasi.

Opting to go independent in the summer of 2001, Hasi premiered one of his own works, *Awakening*, at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland a few months later. As part of the International Choreographer's Showcase, Hasi's work was set to *Angel* by British dance band Massive Attack. "The work is about someone waking up to themselves, then choosing to live fully present in the now," Hasi explains. Proceeds from Hasi's share of the show benefited the Lotus Children's Center in Ulan Batur, a residential center dedicated to the care of street children in Mongolia's capital.

During his time in Edinburgh, it was the sense of cultural exchange from all over the world that made the strongest impression on him. "I had a great time with an associate professor from Buffalo State College in New York. She taught African dance and so we did our own cultural exchange between rehearsals and performances. It was really fun, exchanging moves and teaching each other different styles."

After returning home to China, he produced and directed a modern dance showcase in Beijing in September 2001 entitled *Pick a Direction, Let's Go!* "A lot of my friends were with traditional dance companies, where they didn't have much room to experiment or express more individual styles. So this was the perfect opportunity for us to get together, step out and pour our hearts into creating something innovative."

In 2002, Hasi was awarded a UNESCO Artist Bursary for a one-month dance residency at the National Dance Academy of Thailand - where he choreographed and performed with the local dance company. "The hot and humid weather

took some getting used to," he admits. "It was fascinating to work with modern dancers from a completely different cultural reference. Not only did my English improve but I really appreciated the quality of life and the gentleness inherent in the Thai culture. It was the first time I'd ever lived outside China for that long, so it really helped me grow," he says.

Not just a dancer

Not content with just creating and performing, Hasi also believes in giving something back to society. "It's important to me that art does not just stay in an ivory tower, considering itself far above mundane concerns," he says. During the summer of 2002, he taught classes at the Children's Village north of Beijing, a home for children whose family or guardians are in prison. Hasi's classes gave these children access to a channel of self-expression that they might otherwise never have discovered. He was impressed by what he saw. "The kids were great," he says. "I asked them early on to choreograph their own work, and the work that resulted was both interesting and moving."

Hasi also finds time to indulge another passion: writing poetry. Having published his poetry in the Mongolian-language monthly magazine *Hongalo*, Hasi continues to read voraciously. "Often people have the idea that artists are this type of person who just does this one very special thing, when in fact everyone is an artist. We can each express ourselves in many different ways if we just let ourselves shine," says Hasi. As to his penchant for reading, he says, "Reading has always been my window to the world, and a way for me to stretch the concepts I have beyond where I thought they could go. It's one of the most liberating things an artist can do for their growth," he says.

Working with musician Jin Shan, Hasi improvised in several performances in 2003. "Improvisation is a great way to take the mood of the room and the mood of the artist to create a unique tailor-made piece for that moment. There's nothing else like it in terms of freedom or the pressure on performance," he says.

Hasi continues to accept commissions for both choreography and performance, both locally and abroad. He also teaches modern dance at schools and dance companies, both in Beijing and Inner Mongolia. "To me, being an artist is about being clear on what you have to say and then saying it with courage. It's about not being stopped by oneself or being limited by artificial impositions."



Hammers Raise for Spring Festival Auctions



Lot 1977, jade carving, Playing Go, Hanhai Auction



Lot 306, Flowers and Bees by Qi Bai-shi, China Guardian

By Yi Yi

To mark the coming Spring Festival, three local auction will raise the hammer during this weekend.

Hanhai Auctions is offering the largest amount of artifacts of the three. Over 2,500 lots in 11 special auctions, such as modern and contemporary Chinese painting and calligraphy, selected works of Zhang Daqian, rare books, jade ware, snuff bottles and porcelain, will be put up for sale from Saturday till Monday in the third floor ball room of the Jing Guang Center.

Among the 500 modern and contemporary Chinese painting and calligraphy works, *Nine Oxen* by Li Keran, with a rare size of 2.6 meters in width, is predicted to attract fierce bidding. The estimate price of the work is 5.5 million to 6.8 million yuan.

The snuff bottle special auction features over 200 lots, among which a bronze enamel bottle from the reign of Emperor Yongzheng (1723-1735) and a black and white jade snuff bottle made in Suzhou during the mid-Qing Dynasty will be the most eye-catching, with estimates of 200,000 to 300,000 yuan and 300,000 yuan to 400,000 yuan respectively.

Jade ware has been an exclusive category for Hanhai since 1994. No other auction house has the capacity to solicit enough lots for an independent auction. Most of the 200 lots are fine in material, vivid in shape and elaborate in engraving. Previews of all 11 auctions will run till 6 pm today at the Jing Guang Center.

After concluding its autumn auction with a record volume of 251 million yuan, China Guardian

has organized a small-scale auction of 570 pieces of ancient, modern and contemporary Chinese painting and calligraphy works, as well as 82 oil paintings. The 82 oil paintings, offered by two well-known collectors, one from Hong Kong and one from the United States, are predominantly realistic works with low base price. The auction will be held today at the Kunlun Hotel.

The last of the three, presented by Pacific Auctions, will be held Monday at the King Wing Hotel. Seven hundred lots of Chinese paintings and calligraphy and 300 lots of porcelain and Chinese works of art will go under the hammer. Works by many established painters such as Li Kuchan, Wang Xuetao, Huang Zhou are to be auctioned with very low base prices or no reserve. The preview is on Saturday and Sunday.

Ancient Tortoise Shells Excite Archeologists

By Yi Yi

After thorough examination, archeologists have concluded that two tortoise shell segments excavated recently in Shannxi Province date back to the Zhou Dynasty (11 century - 221 BC).

One of the pieces has 38 characters inscribed on it, more than on any other such shell from this period excavated to date. What makes this find so important, however, is the fact that the fragments are from the back shell of a tortoise. All the other Zhou Dynasty inscriptions discovered previously have been made on tortoises under-shells.

According to a report in Shannxi's Huashang Daily, the two tortoise shell fragments are yellowish-brown in color, with tiny characters inscribed on them. On both pieces, the surface has obviously been sawn, which is also unusual.

Unexpected Discovery

The two pieces of shells were discovered by a joint archeological team from Peking University's archeology department, the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Shannxi Provincial Archeology Institute during an inspection tour of the Zhouyuan Archeological Site in Qishan County.

On December 14, Xu Tianjin, an associate professor at Peking University, together with a team of archeology students, found a small piece of tortoise shell in the ditch around Zhougong Temple.

The unexpected discovery aroused great interest from the team, and they immediately organized a comprehensive excavation. At two in the afternoon the two broken tortoise shells were found. Both of the two tortoise shell sections are over 10 centimeters long.

Large scale excavation called for

Tortoise shells with inscribed characters were used by the royal family during the Zhou Dynasty. The discovery therefore suggests that an important new Zhou Dynasty archeological site will emerge.

It has long been assumed that Zhouyuan Archeological Site in Qishan County is the original site of the Zhou capital. Some experts say that the new discovery will challenge this proposition.

Archeologists and experts on ancient Chinese characters have begun to decipher the two pieces of tortoise shells, but so far they have only been able to recognize some 10 characters.

Xu Tianjin, who found the shells, is a member of an expert panel on the history of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties. He believes that the two shell fragments were used by fortune-tellers in the Zhou Dynasty.

The discovery of the two tortoise shells suggests that the area around Zhougong Temple might have been a prosperous urban area during the Zhou Dynasty.

According to the archeological bureau, a large-scale investigation on the area will be launched in the near future.



Detail of one of the inscribed tortoise shells

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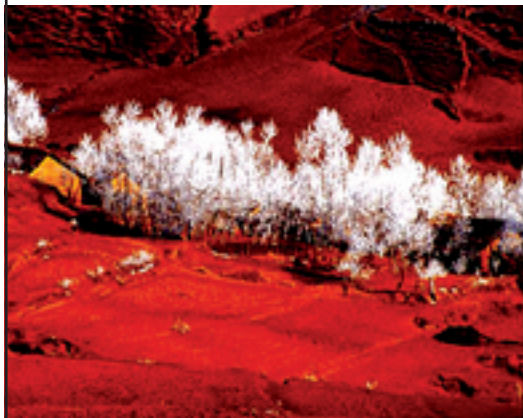
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Can New Firm Save Independent Chinese Film?



Scenes from Two Big Sheep



Director Liu Hao (middle) during filming of Two Big Sheep in Yunnan.

By Philomena Cho

Despite winning accolades at international festivals for nearly two decades, the present state and future of independent film in China looks bleak. Aside from giants with reputations in this country and abroad, such as Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige, few directors command either the resources or audience followings to make decent movies. The increasing availability of foreign films for domestic audiences further decreases Chinese filmmakers' competitive edge.

To the rescue comes New Film, the brainchild of Lola, a former independent film director and performance artist turned corporate entrepreneur. Producer and project director for China Youth New Film Engineering under Peking Kwans Media Investment Co., this young mover and shaker is well on her way to making New Film China's first independent movie brand.

"Rather than being a departure from performance art or independent film, I see this project as a ten-year performance art piece," Lola confides. "The point is not to just talk about something, but to do something which creates the possibility for positive change."

Kwans Media has a long-term vision for New Film. "This project is intended to help a new generation of directors attain the kind of domestic and international renown enjoyed by luminaries like Zhang Yimou or Chen Kaige," says Lola. "In turn, these directors can then use that influence to transform and inspire, rather than just churn out frothy entertainment. This new brand aims to stimulate China's film industry by producing an influential body of work which would then open a way for other directors and stories to reach a wider audience."

The first movie of New Film's premiere series will be directed by Liu Hao, who walked away with two awards at last year's

Berlin Film Festival for his movie *Chen Muo and Mei Ting*. His new project, titled *Liang Zhi Dayang*, or *Two Big Sheep*, explores the drastic impact a gift of two rare imported sheep has on a farmer whose standard of living does match that required by his new animals. In a radical departure from more common stories about down-and-out farmers, this movie ends on an upbeat note. Liu Hao is currently filming on location in Yunnan Province and *Two Big Sheep* will debut at cinemas across China in March.

The Bicycle, a film directed by recent Central Film Academy graduate Ning Hao, 26, is expected to hit theatres in June or July this year. Shortly after Lola signed him up for the project, Ning won Japan's most prestigious film award for his student film. "I was so happy to be vindicated for selecting such a young director. He really is someone with the potential to be a future Zhang Yimou," she enthuses.

By the end of this year, the New Film project will release seven movies, each of which were shot using 4 million yuan in capital provided by Kwans Media. "It's very important to me that the directors have the freedom to realize their visions, and not worry about the marketing or commercial side," notes Lola. "That's my job, and I have turned down sponsorships where there was too much interference with the story and execution."

Independent directors all over China have been entranced by the idea of getting money to make their dream films and Kwans Media has been swamped by project applications. Regarding how she selects the lucky few, Lola notes, "I choose first and foremost by the director and the script. Not only does the script have to be a strong story with broad audience appeal, but the director must have the right personality, character and integrity to be able to realize the story and get the project done."

Once Lola was able to show her bosses how television and satellite broadcasting rights, DVD and audio rights and digital film could generate sufficient return on investment, Kwans Media's main concern was avoiding any political complications as the government cautiously loosens its restrictions on independent filmmaking. She explains, "I came up with the concept of branding these movies so it makes it a clearly packaged commercial project and clearly distances it from any potential political concerns."

This strategy appears to have worked well for Kwans Media so far. "The project has not only gotten a lot of positive press and government support, we've managed to get the China Film Academy to approve the project. The close working relationship we have with Peking University also helps enormously," Lola notes. "There seems to be a growing recognition of China's potential to culturally influence international audiences in particular."

New Film also fits in well with China's expanding role in the world cultural area, bolstered by the holding of such events as Beijing's first International Art Biennale this year and a slew of other international art events in the lead up to the Olympics. Lola sees the present as ripe with opportunity for changing global perceptions of Chinese film. "Many past movies about rural China have created this mistaken global impression about how backward China is, when in reality China is so multi-faceted that just one glimpse of a rural village doesn't nearly do justice to the diversity of China today," she explains.

In her opinion, movies are the best medium for changing such misconceptions and reaching out to domestic audiences. Lola concludes, "Film is one of the closest arts to the people. It's multi-media, it's accessible and it's powerful."

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London Philharmonic Celebrates New Year in Beijing



The London Philharmonic Orchestra performed a trio of concerts in the Great Hall of the People.

By Guo Yuandan

The London Philharmonic Orchestra performed a trio of concerts in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on 31 December 2003 and 1 January 2004. This was the first visit to China by the orchestra since its pioneering tour to Beijing 30 years ago.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra has exhilarated audiences with performances by world renowned conductors and soloists since its foundation in 1932 by Sir Thomas Beecham.

The orchestra performed two concerts on New Year's Eve, joined by the Beijing Symphony Orchestra. The joint concerts were conducted by Alexander Briger and Tan Lihua, artistic director of the Beijing Symphony Orchestra. On New Year's Day,

the Brits returned to the Great Hall for a third concert.

A mixed program included Bizet, Tchaikovsky, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Rossini Beethoven and Chinese composers Bao Yuankai and Fang Kejie. The concert also featured 26-year-old Shanghai-born Canadian violinist Yi-jia Susanne Hou, who has won gold medals at three international violin competitions.

British soprano Sara Dinan and Canadian tenor John MacMaster sang excerpts from *Phantom of Opera* and then joined Chinese baritone Liao Changyong for the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Liao himself sang some Chinese folk songs and his trademark aria from *The Barber of Seville*.

WORLDWIDE



Ray Davies
The Kinks' Davies Shot in New Orleans

Ray Davies, the lead singer of British rock group The Kinks, was released from the hospital on Monday after being shot in the leg while chasing a mugger.

Davies, 59, was walking with a woman in the city's French Quarter Sunday evening when the shooting occurred, police said.

"Two men approached and had taken the woman's purse. He ran after them and was wounded in the right thigh," police spokesman Marlin Defillo told Reuters. Police have arrested one suspect in the shooting and are searching for the second.

Davies was on the 2004 New Year's honors list, and named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. It ranks below the knighthoods earlier given to Paul McCartney, Mick Jagger and Elton John.



Ashanti
Ashanti Gets 'Carter' for First Film

Grammy-nominated songstress Ashanti is headed to the big screen for the first time, scoring a supporting role in *Coach Carter*, a fact-based basketball drama starring Samuel L. Jackson.

The Paramount Pictures project revolves around Richmond High School coach Ken Carter, who made national news in 1999 when he benched his entire undefeated basketball team for poor academic performance. He forfeited two league games and made the gym off-limits until students raised their grades, a move

that drew praise and criticism from parents and school officials.

Ashanti will play Kyra, the newly pregnant girlfriend of one of the basketball players to be played by Rob Brown of *Finding Forrester* fame.



David Arquette and Courteney Cox

Friends Star Courteney Cox Expecting First Child

Friends star Courteney Cox, who has tried for years to become a mother, is expecting her first child with actor husband David Arquette, her publicist said on Tuesday.

Cox's spokeswoman said the 39-year-old actress was expecting a baby but gave no other details about the pregnancy which follows what Cox herself has referred to as "many miscarriages" over the years.

Cox and Arquette, who married in June 1999, have spoken publicly about their infertility troubles and said in a television interview last year that they were trying to conceive via in-vitro fertilization after a string of miscarriages.

Cox's pregnancy coincides with the last season of the hit TV sitcom *Friends* where her screen character Monica and TV husband Chandler, played by Matthew Perry, have been exploring adoption after being unable to conceive.

Six Years After Death, Diana Still Haunts Royals

Six years after her death, Princess Diana still haunts Britain's royal family from the grave - but even close allies dismissed her suspicion that Prince Charles was plotting to kill her.

For her former husband and their two sons, the agony shows no sign of fading. For the conspiracy theorists, there is no smoke without fire.

What made Diana front-page news yet again around the world was not just the opening of the inquest but a tabloid newspaper naming Charles as the person she suspected of plotting to kill her.

Reuters
Edited by Guo Yuandan



Wu Bai Rocks into Town

By Guo Yuandan

Taiwan pop star Wu Bai is holding a concert at Beijing's Capital Gymnasium on January 16. He will be backed by his band China Blue, featuring Shao Ju on bass, Big Cat on keyboards and Dino Zavolta on drums.

Known in Taiwan as the "King of live music," Wu Bai and China Blue began playing music twenty years ago, building a loyal and devoted following. During the concert, Wu will invite local legend Cui Jian onto the stage as a special guest, sure to be one of the night's rock 'n' roll highlights.

Local Director Signs International Contract

By Chen Ying

A signing ceremony for a contract between young movie director Hao Ran and an international entertainment company was held in Beijing yesterday afternoon at the company's Beijing office in Chaoyang District.

"As far as I know, this is the first time that a movie director in China's mainland has signed a contract with an international entertainment company," said Wang Huaidong, public relations manager of US company Trans Continental Talent.

The company signed a five-year contract with Hao at the ceremony, and announced the same day the establishment of the Hao Ran Film studio.

One of China's talented young movie directors, Hao graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in 1991 and has to date made three movies. His first two movies, *Young Lei Feng* (1996) and *Bright*



Hao Ran

Heart (2001) won several local awards.

From December 1997 to October 1998, he studied western film-making techniques at UCLA and New York University in the US. His third movie, *Living and Loving...* was released by New Film Distribution.

"Now I'm preparing for *Living and Loving... II* and will make a TV play later. With the company's help, I will cooperate with a Hollywood studio to make a movie," Hao told media. He expressed the hope that the new contract would give him more freedom and international exposure.

"It's been part of the company's plan to invest in China's movie and TV industry since we set up the subsidiary here a year ago. We have been looking for a Chinese director as the turning point to become further involved with China's movie industry," said Wang Huaidong.

北京青年报
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Chinese Baseball Steps to the Plate

By Hou Mingxin

Rumors stirring over the past two weeks that media mogul Rupert Murdoch wants to buy a Chinese Baseball League (CBL) team were confirmed by Shen Wei, general secretary of the Chinese Baseball Association (CBA) in an interview with *Beijing Today* last Wednesday. She also said that from its relatively low-profile present position, domestic baseball has bright prospects for future development.

New league drawing international attention

The CBL, China's first professional baseball league, was established in 2002. To date, the league has only four teams, the Beijing Tigers, Tianjin Lions, Shanghai Eagles and Guangzhou Lightening.

Despite its small size, the pro baseball league has already developed a surprisingly enthusiastic national fan base. Last year, attendance averaged several hundred people per game and TV viewership was much larger, as half of the 48 regular season games and the championships were aired live on China Central Television (CCTV) and several local TV stations. Foreign networks, including the US' CBS and Japan's NHK, have also covered some CBL action.

In this climate, Murdoch's ownership bid is not a complete surprise. Shen told *Beijing Today* that contact between the CBA and Murdoch's representative is just in beginning stages, but the mogul's intention to own has been made clear.

According to Shen, besides establishing his own team in 2005, Murdoch also plans to promote the development of baseball in China through his massive media empire. The CBA has given Murdoch permission to hire foreign coaches and up to three international players, but Shen emphasized that the rest of the roster must be filled by Chinese athletes.

Murdoch's move comes on the heels of a landmark deal signed between the US' Major League Baseball (MLB) and the CBA on November 23 last year. That two-year deal calls for the MLB to help foster the development of baseball in China, in part to cultivate Olympic-caliber players in the domestic league, and also in order to further open the door to the country's massive market.

The agreement calls for MLB to implement a variety of game development and youth initiatives in China, including coach and umpire training and working with the national team. The deal also enables American major league clubs to scout and sign Chinese players to professional contracts.

Chinese officials called the agreement "historic" and said it would help baseball mirror the success of football and basketball, both of which have exploded in popularity in China over the past decade.

Only 20 years ago, a high school team from Japan would have been able to make easy work of China's national baseball squad. Today, the gap between China and the top three Asian baseball powers, Japan, South Korea and Chinese Taipei, has diminished. At the Asian Championships held in Japan last

November, those teams had to summon their top professional players in order to defeat China, Shen said.

Four obstacles to overcome

Although baseball has been played in China for over a century, it has not become nearly as popular as football or basketball as a result of four factors, according to Shen.

First is the problem of ballparks. Baseball fields are very large, up to four times the size of a football pitch, requiring a great deal of space and investment. Only a few domestic cities can claim to have decent ballparks.

Moreover, fundamental baseball equipment, such as balls, bats, gloves, jerseys and hats, are relatively expensive for most Chinese, particularly because most such equipment is imported.

A third factor inhibiting the faster growth of the sport is the complexity of baseball rules. The association has arranged for experts to give running explanations of play and regulations for audiences during games, but the elaborate rules continue to mystify many people. People that do not understand the game are unlikely to become fans, said Shen.

The last factor is game duration. Unlike football, basketball and many other sports, baseball has no set play time, making it difficult to schedule televised games.

Looking forward to 2008

Despite such problems, baseball is a sport on the rise in this country. Shen told *Beijing Today* that she believed China could do well at the 2008 Olympics if baseball continues to develop at its current pace over the next four years. Her hope for the team to finish among the top six at the Beijing Games.

Shen's optimistic appraisal is based on the idea that baseball is a game that requires team spirit and intelligent play, making it a good match to Chinese athletes' strengths.

According to Shen, an encouraging sign for the future of baseball in China is the performance of domestic juvenile softball teams. China has claimed seven titles at the U-12 World Soft Baseball Championships over the past two decades, though that success has received minimal domestic press coverage, she told *Beijing Today*.

In 1986, a the top Chinese youth softball team was invited to play in the US against four teams of their same age. To most people's surprise, the Chinese kids swept all four games. They were subsequently invited to the White House by then Vice President George H. Bush, making them the only Chinese sports team to receive that honor, Shen said.

At present, about 20 provinces have baseball teams at primary and high school levels, and more than 50 domestic universities and colleges have squads. Some prominent institutions of higher learning, such as Tsinghua and Beijing universities, even have teams for each department. A national college league is expected to be established in the near future.

Shen also hopes that CBL will cultivate a Yao Ming-like superstar who could go on to play in the MLB, a development that would greatly aid the growth of Chinese baseball.



A Beijing Tigers player takes the plate during the team's 11-1 rout of the Guangzhou Lightening last April 12 in Beijing.

Photo by Photocom

Big Doings in Sport in 2004

By Zhang Bo

The past year was one of struggle and disappointment in the realm of Chinese sports. The SARS outbreak forced the Women's World Cup to shift from China to the US and the experienced Chinese squad failed to play up to expectations. The men's national football squad, under the leadership of new coach Arie Hann of the Netherlands, also did not impress. The only highlight

of 2003 was the victory of the Chinese women at the volleyball World Cup.

This year promises to be much more successful and cement China's position in international sport. A whole series of major events are slated to be held in this country, including the Asia Football Cup, a Formula One race, NBA pre-season games, the ATP China Open tennis tournament, a PGA tour golf tournament, and the debut of China's Premier Soccer League.

May big for soccer and golf

On May 15, with the support of the Chinese Football Association (CFA), the new Premier League will enter operation. The league will represent the pinnacle of domestic football and is aimed at achieving the heights of play quality and sponsorship wealth enjoyed by England's Premiership and other top international leagues.

The debut will spell the end of China's Division A League, the decade-long history of which was riddled by scandal. Whether the Premier League truly offers anything new, or is just a nominal change, remains to be seen.

At around the same time, from May 13 to 16, the PGA European Tour will visit China for the first time for the BMW Asian Open in Shanghai. The tournament will be held at

the Thomson Golf Club and is a clear indication of the country's rising stature in the golfing world.

Asian Cup coming in July

Shortly before the Athens Olympics dominates sports headlines, the best men's football Asia has to offer will come to China as sixteen powers vie for the Asian Cup, starting on July 17.

China's prospects in the tournament look good, in part for the fact that host nations have won six of the past 12 Cups. Teams in Asia are relatively even in terms of skill and competitiveness, allowing hosts to make the most of home-field advantages, such as scheduling.

Having reached fourth place or better in five out of seven tournaments, the Chinese national team has a history of playing well in the Asian Cup, and domestic fans will definitely be pulling for the team to go all the way this year.

Olympics returns home in August

A century after their revival, the Olympics Games will return to their birthplace of Athens, Greece, in August.

China's Olympic team won the third most golds of any nation at the Sydney Olympics in 2000, the best record for a Chinese team in history. The goal set by China's Olympic delega-

tion for Athens is to equal or surpass that performance.

NBA to warm up in China in October

Chinese all-star center Yao Ming will play in his hometown of Shanghai again this fall in a pair of NBA pre-season matches scheduled to be held in that city and Beijing in October. The games are part of the league's continuing efforts to support the development and growth of basketball in China.

Yao's Houston Rockets will take on the Sacramento Kings in both games.

F1 and tennis in November

Domestic Formula One fans are in for a treat on November 26 when the first Grand Prix of China is held in Shanghai.

F1 racing is a sport on the rise in this country, receiving increasing media and public attention. There is little possibility that the Federation of International Automobiles (FIA) is unaware of the potential of the huge domestic market, and scheduling the race seems a move that should pay off for many parties.

Top stars of the tennis world will converge on Beijing from November 13 to 19 for the first China Tennis Open, an event in the men's ATP tour. The tournament is aimed at being even more successful than last September's Master Shanghai Master Cup, which attracted impressive talent to play for a total of \$3.7 million in prize money.



Xinhua Photo

Racing across the Sahara

Tuesday marked the sixth day of the 26th Paris-Dakar Rally, which will take 142 cars, 195 motorcycles and 63 trucks across the scorching Sahara desert. The 19-day rally will stretch a total of 11052.5 kilometers.

The city of Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province, and its celebrated West Lake, has long been a standard for natural beauty and high culture in China. In its heyday, as the capital of the Southern Song Dynasty, Hangzhou was an advanced metropolis that outstripped many other cities within and far beyond China's borders. For one thing, the city developed a still-cherished cuisine and had active restaurants centuries before their likes appeared in Europe, as observed by Marco Polo when he visited Hangzhou sometime between 1276 and 1292.

The foods of Hangzhou, as well as the other cities of Ningbo, Shaoxing and Wenzhou, make up the bulk of Zhejiang cuisine, one of the eight main schools of Chinese cooking. Zhejiang dishes, in particular those of the lakeside city, are best known for being light, nutritious and fresh, allowing the natural flavors of premium local ingredients such as bamboo shoot, grass carp and good pork to shine.

Most of Hangzhou's most famous dishes are based on regional ingredients. Though it is popular nationwide, people in the know will say that Xihu cuyu, or West Lake carp, is only good if made from fish from that lake. The carp in this dish are cut in a distinctive way, split down the middle from head to tail and served eyes-up, lightly poached and covered in a sharp sour and sweet sauce.

Another specialty, longjing xiaren, shrimp stir-fried with Dragon Well tea, makes use of two prominent local products, river shrimp and longjing tea, widely considered the finest kind of green tea available in this country.

In general, Hangzhou food, with its emphasis on fresh ingredients and delicious sauces made of simple materials such as soy sauce and Shaoxing wine (see sidebar at right), is one of China's more elegant schools of cuisine and makes a nice break from heavier local fare.



Jiaohuaji (beggar's chicken, 78 yuan) at Zhangshengji

By Joel Kirkhart

Among the most reputed Zhejiang-style eateries in town are the three Kong Yiji restaurants, all of which are perpetually busy. And for good reason – the food is superb, the service stellar and the prices reasonable.

Not to be missed are the fish and seafood dishes. Definitely worth trying is the *youbao hexia* (river shrimp cooked in oil, 30 yuan), small fresh shrimps flash cooked, shell and all, that are juicy, a little sweet and delicious. Also excellent is the *Ningshi shansi* (Ningbo-style eel slices, 30 yuan), thin strips of tender eel stir-fried with yellow chives. It's a bit oily, as traditional calls for, but very tasty. Clams star in the *congyou chao haiguazi* (small clams with onion oil, 28 yuan), a heaping plate of tiny mollusks quick fried with onions and ginger, and the *gade zhengdan*, eggs steamed with clams that makes a soothing end to a meal.

Kong Yiji justifies its reputation with its outstanding *Dongpo rou* (5 yuan for a small bowl), in which the pork is meltingly tender and richly flavored. Meat lovers should also try the *youtiao chao niurou* (28 yuan), chunks of fried oil sticks stir-fried with beef slices in a delicious sauce.

When it comes to vegetables, there are again many choices. A Zhejiang treat is the *youmensun* (20 yuan), fresh bamboo shoots in tasty brown sauce. The simple *xiaojianjiao chao qiezi* (eggplant stir-fried with small chilies, 18 yuan) is fantastic, the chilies mild and the eggplant cooked fast and tender. Finish off a meal with a bowl of *yanduxian* (28 yuan), a salty, satisfying soup made of bamboo shoot and salted pork in rich broth.

No meal at Kong Yiji would be complete without sampling some of their outstanding *huangjiu*, or Shaoxing rice wine, and a full half kilo of three-year-old *huadiao* only costs 20 yuan.

Where: No. 322 Dongsì Beidaijie, Dongcheng **Tel:** 6404 0507 **Open:** 10 am – midnight

Where: Shishahai Nan'an, far west end of Houhai, Xicheng **Tel:** 6618 4917 **Open:** 10 am – 2 pm, 4:30-9:30 pm **Average cost:** 50 yuan per person

Xihu Chuancái, a Hangzhou restaurant on Ping'an Avenue near Shishahai, opened late last year, but with its unimpressive food and service, is likely to got he way of the dodo soon unless things get better fast.

The inside is simple, the only real strike against it being the

lack of warmth except that provided by portable heaters. The short, inexpensive menu reveals this establishment as somewhere between a full-on restaurant and a snack joint.

The house specialty is noodles, especially *laoya mian* (20 yuan), or duck noodles. For all the hype, that dish is unremarkable and nearly tasteless. The *Hangzhou chaomian* (Hangzhou fried noodles, 10 yuan), chewy, oily noodles with chives and a flat brown sauce, are not much better.

Among the main dishes, the *luobosi chao hexia* (river shrimps fried with radish strips, 22 yuan) was a disappointing pile of frozen shrimp with mushy, tasteless radish. A slight improvement was the *jiangchao jianjiao qiezi* (eggplant fried with chilies in brown sauce, 10 yuan), though the eggplant was overcooked and the sauce overpowering. The *yansuancai shao doufu* (12 yuan) came in a generous portion but was not very impressive. If Zhejiang fare was meant to taste like this, it would not have its reputation.

The only relatively authentic and assuredly tasty dish in the meal was the *jiangrou zheng dongsun* (bamboo shoot steamed with salted pork, 25 yuan), pieces of salted meat laid over fresh bamboo shoot and then steamed, which had a salty, fresh taste that spoke distinctly of Hangzhou food. Now that

Shishahai is prime dining territory, there are far better nearby choices than this mediocre restaurant.

Where: No. 6 Di'anmen Xidajie, Dongcheng **Tel:** 8404 8884 **Open:** 11 am – 10 pm **Average cost:** 30 yuan per person

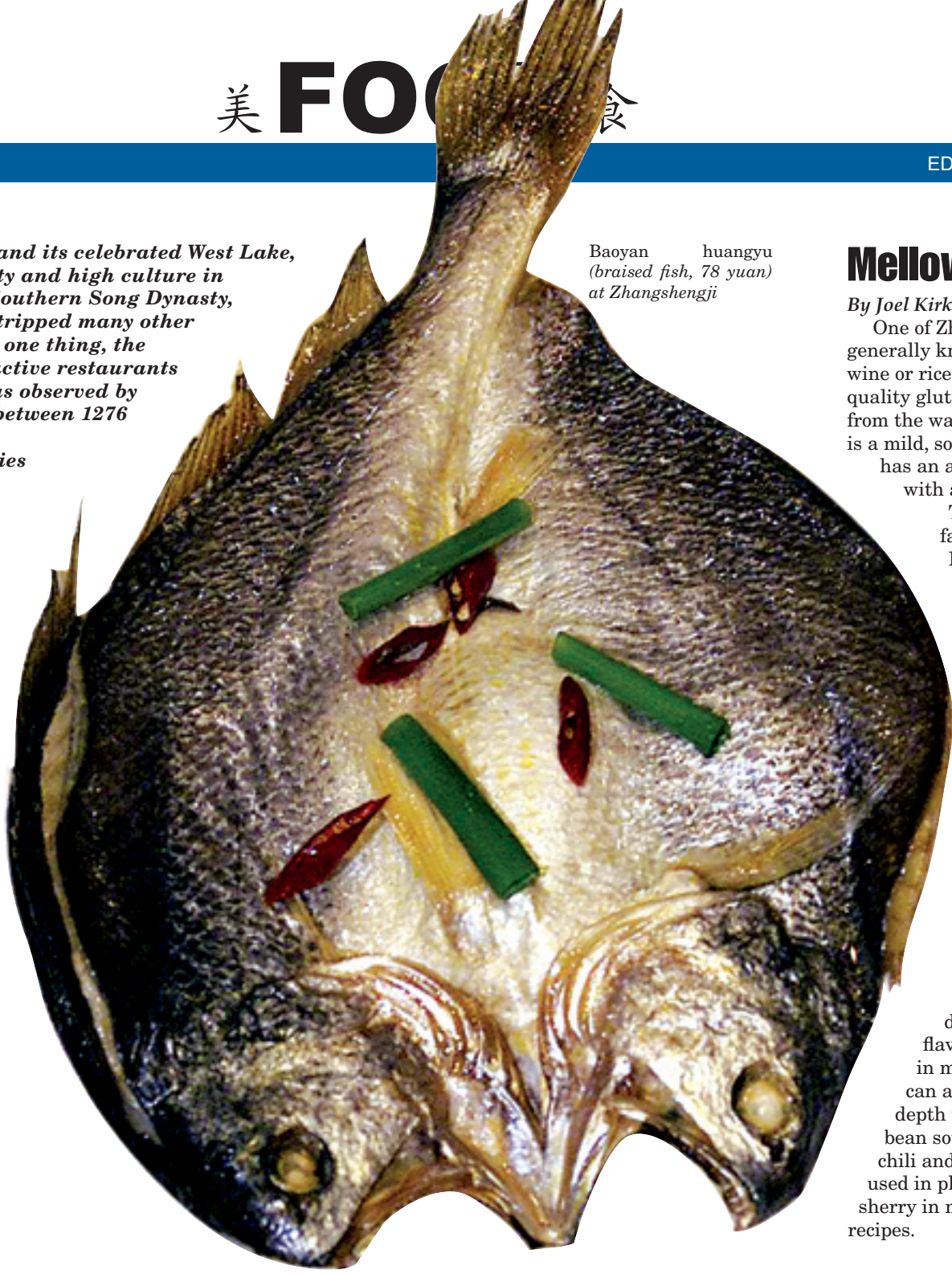
Hangzhou cuisine specialist Zhangshengji is so popular that the only way to get a table without waiting for an hour is to show up before 5:30 pm or go in a large group, because they only take reservations for groups of 10 or more. And while the food is good, why it draws such hordes is a bit of a mystery.

The restaurant's sprawling, packed interior is decent, but not remarkable. The robust business is probably to blame, but service is a bit curt, distracted and more interested in clearing tables than advising customers.

Food comes out incredibly fast from what must be an enormous kitchen. Our cold dish selection, *zui ji* (drunken chicken, 26 yuan), which had an appealing natural chicken flavor, hit the table no more than two minutes after we put in our order.

The *daoducai jianjiao chao chengzirou* (fried razor clam with chili pepper and pickle, 38 yuan)

Baoyan huangyu
(braised fish, 78 yuan)
at Zhangshengji



Hangzhou Hankerings

Mellow Yellow Wine

By Joel Kirkhart

One of Zhejiang's most famous products is *huangjiu*, generally known outside the country as Shaoxing yellow wine or rice wine. This rich brew is made from high quality glutinous rice, wheat and pure water, preferably from the waters of Jianhu Lake in the city of Shaoxing. It is a mild, somewhat sweet, amber-colored concoction that has an alcohol content of 15 to 20 percent, improves with age and should be served warm.

The brewing of huangjiu can be traced back as far as the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.). Today, huangjiu is still made in many households in Zhejiang and nearby regions using traditional methods. In Beijing, some of the best places to try huangjiu are the Kong Yiji restaurants (see review at left), where they brew and age their own.

There are many varieties of huangjiu, all of which are readily available at restaurants and supermarkets around town, but the best kinds are arguably *huadiao* and *nu'erhong*. *Huadiao*, which literally translates to "floral sculpture," is so named because its bottles come painted or sculpted with images of birds and flowers

According to ancient Zhejiang custom, *nu'erhong* huangjiu is a special marker of the birth of a daughter. The brew is bottled and stored when a girl is born and then opened 15 years later when she has grown up.

Not only is huangjiu an enjoyable drink on a cold night, it is also a flavorful addition to food and an ingredient in many delectable Chinese sauces. Yet it can also add appealing depth to Western-style bean soups and chili and can be used in place of sherry in most recipes.



Huangjiu ranges greatly in price in keeping with quality. A bottle of cheap jiafan (right) can cost as little as 6 yuan, while a finer aged huadiao can go for upwards of 60 yuan.

Photos by Lou Ge / Joel Kirkhart

Poetic Pork

By Joel Kirkhart

Eleventh-century poet and master chef Su Dongpo came up with many culinary creations that are still popular in Chinese cooking today. Perhaps his most famous dish, *Dongpo rou*, or Dongpo-style pork, is a standard at every Hangzhou-style restaurant and a good measure of an eatery's quality and authenticity. In the dish, which is time consuming but relatively easy to make, belly-cut pork is slow-cooked in a simple sauce until tender to the point that it melts in the mouth.

Recipe: Dongpou Rou

Ingredients:

About 800 grams belly pork with rind
6-7 tbsp water
2 tbsp sugar
6-7 tbsp Shaoxing wine
6-7 tbsp dark or mushroom soy sauce
8 thick slices peeled ginger
10 spring onions, halved and trimmed

Procedure:

Remove the thin layer of caul fat from the meat but leave rind and other sides intact. Cut pork into eight square or rectangular pieces.

Blanch the pork by cooking it in boiling water for two minutes. Pour into a colander and rinse to remove scum. Drain.

Place the meat, rind side down, into one or two heatproof clay pots with lids. Add water, sugar, wine and soy sauce and evenly coat meat with mixture. Add the ginger and spring onion and cover pot(s).

Steam the closed pots in a steamer over medium-high heat for up to four hours. Check pork for tenderness before three hours of cooking. When done, the meat and fat should be very soft and succulent.

Remove the pots from the steamer and take out the ginger. Allow the dish to cool and then refrigerate for a few hours to get fat to congeal. Spoon off and discard fat.

When ready to serve, spoon out jellyed sauce, put it in a saucepan and boil over high heat to reduce until dense and slightly caramelized. Reduce heat to low, add pork to the pan and cook until piping hot, spooning the sauce over the pork.

Makes eight small servings.



Song Dynasty poet and gourmand Su Dongpo, creator of Dongpo rou.



Well-cooked Dongpo rou is rich, delicious and melts in the mouth.



Spirit of the Dance China Tour 2004

Spirit of the Dance is a cross between Riverdance and Salsa! It is a production featuring a blend of traditional culture from Ireland and the passionate Latino rhythms of Flamenco.

Where: Beizhan Theater, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie **When:** January 17-23, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-1,080 yuan **Tel:** 6835 1383

Canadian Carmen

Canada's Alberta Ballet, led by artistic director Jean Grand-Maitre, is to perform Carmen in Beijing. Founded in the early 1950s, Canada's fourth largest ballet troupe has gained great acclaim worldwide.

Where: Beizhan Theater, 135 Xizhimen Waidajie **When:** January 9-10, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-480 yuan **Tel:** 6835 4455

Iron Taps and Steps

Led by talented dancer Wally Eastwood, the Iron Beats Tap-Dancing Troupe from Las Vegas is to tour China. Eastwood has danced on stage since he was seven. The troupe has visited 25 countries in Europe, the Americas and Asia. Their dances mix humor into various styles of steps with flavors from Argentina, Ireland and Africa.

Where: Beizhan Theater, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie **When:** January 12-16, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-1,000 yuan **Tel:** 6835 1383

Swan Lake from Cuba

Founded in 1948 in Havana, the Cuba National Ballet will present its version of Tchaikovsky's classic score about Prince Siegfried's avian romance in Beijing.

Where: The Great Hall of the People **When:** January 12-14, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-1,200 yuan **Tel:** 6406 9999



Underground Attraction Crosstalk (Dixiatie)

Award-winning crosstalk shows will be staged by China Dramatists

Association. Famous crosstalk performers including Jiang Kun, Li Jindou and Gong Hanlin will crack gags from shows that have won top awards in the China Cao Yu Drama Awards.

Where: Nationality Cultural Palace Theater, west to Xidan **When:** January 11-15, 7:30 **Admission:** 80-680 yuan **Tel:** 6602 2770

Subway

A musical based on Taiwan artist Ji Mi's picture-story book, this is a simple story about a 15-year-old blind girl, who steps into a subway in the hope of recovering her lost eyesight. She meets with many real and surreal characters on the way, which helps enrich her life and imagination.

Where: Grand Chang'an Theatre, Jianguomennei Dajie **When:** January 14-18, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-1,000 yuan **Tel:** 6510 1155

Movies



The Rundown

Directed by Peter Berg, starring Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Seann William Scott, Christopher Walken, Rosario Dawson, Ernie Misko. When Travis (Scott), the son of an underworld kingpin, disappears in the Amazon in search of a priceless artifact, retrieval expert Beck (Rock), is sent to get him. Despite their hostility – and their love for the same woman (Dawson) – the two must eventually join forces to fight the evil head of a gold-mining corporation (Walken) who is after the same treasure. English with Chinese subtitles.

Where: UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Kexueyuan Nanlu, Shuangyushu, Haidian **When:** from January 14 **Admission:** 80 yuan **Tel:** 8211 2851

Magic Kitchen (Mohuan Chufang)

Directed by Lee Chi-Ngai. Starring Sammi Cheng, Andy Lau and Wendy Liu. A silly, star-studded romantic comedies from Hong Kong, which tells the story of a beautiful chef striving to break free from a family curse by concocting her food of love. In Mandarin.

Where: Xindong'an Cinema, 5th floor, 138 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** January 1-30 **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 6528 1988



Dillinger Is Dead

Starring Michel Piccoli, Anita Pallenberg and Annie Girardot. A cold dinner on the table. A cold wife stuffed with sleeping pills. A gun

wrapped in a paper dated July 23, 1934, the date John Dillinger was killed. This experimental, but ultimately simple film is a delight to watch, and is probably one of Marco Ferreri's best movies. Italian with English subtitles.

Where: Cultural Office of Italian Embassy, 2 Sanlitun Dong'erjie **When:** January 15, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2187

Gone Is the One Who Held Me Dearest in the World (Shijeshang Zuiteng Wo De Nageren Qule)

Directed by Zhang Jie, starring Si Qin Gao Wa, Huang Suying, Shi Weijian, Gong Peixin. This film begins at the end: An elderly woman passes away and her daughter is distraught. The rest is a tender flashback about how a woman spends the final months of her dying mother's life. Chinese with English subtitles.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu **When:** January 16-17, 8 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 13901134745

Activities



Mahjong Workshop

Mahjong is probably the most popular game across Asia and a real facet of everyday Chinese culture. Beginners and intermediate level players are all welcome.

Where: Level 30, Tower A, Soho **When:** January 9, 6:30-8:30 pm **Admission:** 30 for adults, 20 for students. **Tel:** 8580 1265 **Email:** apexschool@hotmail.com

Fundraising Cocktail

Beijing Human and Animal Environmental Education Centre, a non-profit organization, is holding a fund-raising cocktail event for the animals under the Centre's protection.

Where: Kagen Restaurant, 8 Guanghua Donglu **When:** January 9, 7pm **Admission:** 98 yuan **Tel:** 6583 6830

Exhibitions



Worshipping Buddha by Da Le

January Exhibition

Paintings by Gu Ni, Guo Bu, Gao Yingzhu, Da Le, Huan Yi, Tu Tu.

Where: East Gallery, Deshengmen Watchtower, North Second Ring Road **When:** till January 15 (closed Monday), 9 am – 5:30 pm **Tel:** 8201 4962

Auction

Guardian Auction

More than 570 ancient and modern paintings and calligraphy works will be put under the hammer, along with 82 Chinese oil paintings. Among the painting and calligraphy works, some rare pieces such as an original example of calligraphy writing by Emperor Qianlong in 1772.

Where: Kunlun Hotel, 2 Xinyuan Nanli **When:** January 9, 9:30 am – 6 pm **Tel:** 6590 3388

Jams

Meihao Yaodian

January 10 Glorious Pharmacy (Meihao Yaodian). January 14 there is a party with funk rock and jazz funk blues jams. All musicians welcome to perform.

Where: Loup Chanté Chengfu Lu, Shiweiyang **When:** 9 pm **Admission:** January 10 - 30 yuan, January 14 - free **Tel:** 6276 7355

Lecture

Learn to Sing

Come and sit around the singers and guitarist and learn some typical Chinese folk and pop songs. Handouts of words of the songs in English, Chinese and pinyin are available.

Where: Dirty Nellie's Irish Pub, across the Liangma River from the Kempinski Hotel **When:** January 11, 2:30-4:30 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 8462 2081

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By Guo Yuandan

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Gongwangfu Garden
(恭王府花园)

Located by the southern bank of the lake, Gongwangfu, or the garden of Prince Gong's mansion, was built in the last years of the 18th century by He Shen, a notoriously corrupt Qing Dynasty official.

At the entrance is a 160-meter-long two-story building in which He Shen reputedly stored his treasures and other ill-gotten gains.

To the north of the entrance is a small European style gate behind which the garden lies. The garden features 999 auspicious "bats," either in the shape of the pools, the wooden eaves, or window panes and frames. *Bianfu* (蝙蝠), the Chinese word for bat, is a homonym for "fortune."

There is also a beautifully preserved small theater, which is still used today for Peking opera performances. There are nine large vats beneath the stage floor, causing the sounds produced on the stage to resonate throughout the house.

On February 7, 1799, the second day after Emperor Qianlong's death, the new Emperor Jiaqing removed He Shen from all his posts and ordered his execution. The 46.5 *mu* (approximately 3 hectare) mansion was confiscated, together with 800 million silver liang, an amount ten times the nation's annual taxation income.

Forty years later, Emperor Xianfeng gave the villa to his younger brother, Prince Gong (Gong Wang). It was in this courtyard that Prince Gong signed the Beijing Treaty with the British and French Allied Forces on October 24 and 25, 1860, handing Kowloon and the New Territories to the British and opening Tianjin for trade.

Open: 9 am – 4 pm (closed Monday)

Tel: 6618 0573

Admission: 60 yuan

Mei Lanfang Memorial
(梅兰芳纪念馆)

The courtyard is situated at the northwest corner of the intersection of Huguosi Jie (护国寺街) and Deshengmennei Dajie (德胜门内大街). Mei Lanfang (1894-1961), the master of Peking opera of the 20th century, lived the last ten years of his life in this 1,000 square meter double yard.

The rooms on the northern side are preserved as Mei's living quarters. The rooms to the south house a collection of photographs and historical records. The rooms on the east side exhibit the stage costumes worn by the master, and the west rooms display the gifts and souvenirs he received.

Open: 9 am – 4 pm (closed Monday)

Tel: 6618 0351

Admission: 6 yuan

Xu Beihong Memorial
(徐悲鸿纪念馆)

Around five hundred meters north of Mei Lanfang's former residence is the Xu Beihong Memorial.

Xu (1895-1963) is known as the "founder of China's fine arts education" and "father of China's contemporary arts."

From 1919 to 1927, Xu studied oil painting and sketching in Paris. After returning to China, he devoted his life to establishing a fine arts education system in the country.

Xu expressed his radicalism in his oil paintings illustrating peasant revolutions throughout China's history. But he is most famous for his ink and wash paintings of horses.

The memorial displays his paintings and sketches and offers for sale publications and replicas of his works.

The memorial also incorporates a painting school, which accepts students from all over the world. Senior artists and professors from the Central Academy of Fine Arts are invited to give lectures from time to time.

Open: 9-12 am, 1-5 pm (closed Monday)

Tel: 6225 2042

Admission: free

Former Residence of Soong Ching-ling

Mei Lanfang Memorial



The western-style gate at Gongwangfu Garden



Former Residence of Guo Moruo



Deshengmen



Xu Beihong Memorial

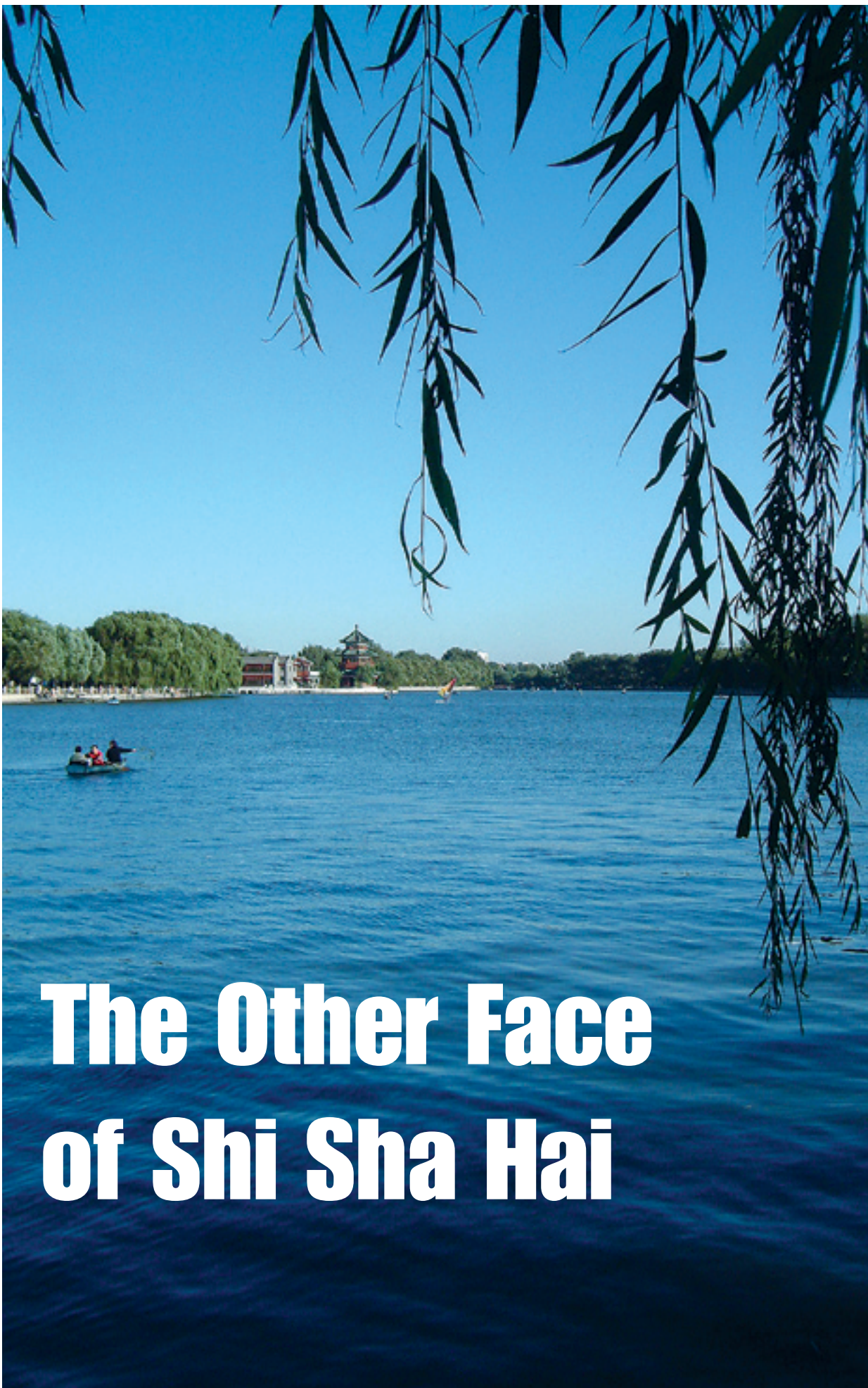


By Zhao Hongyi

Though debate about how much development is too much continues, the new "bar street" along the south bank of Hou Hai (后海) seems to be prospering.

But there is more to Beijing's Lake District, or Shi Sha Hai (什刹海), than pubs and restaurants. Residences of royal family members and senior government officials crowded the banks of the lake during the Qing Dynasty, its popularity due as much to the auspicious geomantic features of the area as its scenic beauty.

Ancient trees stand by inconspicuous entrances and narrow lanes belie the elegance and grandeur of the buildings within these compounds that are rich resources of Chinese history, culture and philosophy.



Photos by Zhao Hongyi

The Other Face
of Shi Sha Hai

Deshengmen (德胜门)

Built in 1439, Deshengmen was one of the nine gate towers in Beijing's city wall. The wall was torn down in the 1950's and Deshengmen is one of only two gate towers that survived. The other is Zhengyangmen (正阳门), just south of Qianmen.

The original Chinese characters for Deshengmen were "得胜门," meaning "victory." Afterwards, it was renamed "德胜门," meaning morality and victory, in memory of loyal military general Yu Lian, who repelled a Mongolian invasion in the mid Ming Dynasty, thus saving the dynasty from collapse.

Unusually for a gate tower, it has no central gateway. People have to go through the two gates on each side. The reason for this idiosyncratic design is that when the wall was built in 1439 during the Ming Dynasty, geomantic experts warned that the royal fortunes would leak away if there was any entrance in the tower, because Deshengmen lay on the central axis of the royal city.

At the foot of the tower is the Museum of Ancient Chinese Coins and Notes. The coins and notes excavated and displayed here tell a three thousand years history of China's currency.

Open: 9 am – 4 pm (closed Monday)

Tel: 6404 4205

Admission: 10 yuan

Former Residence of Guo Moruo (郭沫若故居)

This courtyard on the south east bank of Qianhai was originally the stable of Prince Gong's Mansion. In the 1910s, Le Daren, the founder of Da Ren Tang, the herbal medicine family business, purchased the land and built a siheyuan, or courtyard house on it. From 1950 to 1963, the villa was the Mongolian Embassy in Beijing and then the residence Madam Sun Yet-sen. Guo Moruo and his wife, Yu Liqun, lived here during their last years, between 1963 and 1978.

A literary master of 20th century China, Guo was a scholar of Chinese history and culture. He studied in Japan in his early years, and wrote a great number of historical and realistic drama scripts and translated books about revolution and socialism. After 1949, he shifted his interests and focuses on archeology, translating the ancient Chinese characters on the 5,000-year-old "dragon bones" excavated in Henan Province.

Open: 9 am – 5:30 pm (closed Monday)

Tel: 6618 1650

Admission: 10 yuan

Former Residence of Soong Ching-ling (宋庆龄故居)

The former residence stands on the northern bank of Qianhai. Soong Ching-ling (1893-1981), or Madam Sun Yet-sen, lived here between 1963 and 1981. Today, it is preserved as a memorial to her.

A stream from the lake outside runs through the garden. A roofed corridor surrounds a two-story building in Ming Dynasty style, the main residence.

On the first floor is the living room where Madam Sun, vice president of the People's Republic of China, received her guests. On the second floor is a bedroom, a private office and a library with a collection of more than 3,000 books and magazines.

The house behind the main building holds a collection of items belonging to or used by Madam Sun, including handwriting, paintings, clothing and souvenirs.

Open: 9 am – 4:30 pm (closed Monday)

Tel: 6404 4205

Admission: 10 yuan